

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

November-December 1988



BARNUM & BAILEY CIRCUS GIRL

The Journal of the BANDWAGON Circus Historical Society

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November-December 1988

FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor-Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor
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THIS MONTH'S COVER

This classic image has an odd history, much of which is still unresolved. In 1905 Louis E. Cooke, publicity agent for Barnum and Bailey, commissioned the well known artist and illustrator Charles Bryson to create this work. While at first glance it would appear this lithograph was simply a one sheet to be hung in store windows to announce Barnum and Bailey, such does not appear to be the case.

The bill was printed on much heavier paper than was typical of the period, an indication that it was not mass produced. Further, the poster was published in *McClure's* magazine in color no less, a rarity at the time. Readers were advised they could acquire a 32" x 48" copy by sending a dollar to the Courier Company in Buffalo. At the time chromolithographs were still popular home wall decorations; in fact, the ad in *McClure's* pointed out that the poster contained no advertisement excepting its title "The Barnum and Bailey Circus

Girl" to distinguish it from the millions of posters printed annually for commercial purposes.

While this month's cover is almost certainly that lithograph, the illustration in *McClure's* did not include the horse, the anonymous "Circus Girl" appeared suspended in space, amidst a swirl of colors and a garland of roses. The finished product, however, included the horse, making the bill a bit less abstract and perhaps less attractive.

The *McClure's* illustration may have been an insert in the 1905 Barnum and Bailey Realm, an advance booklet. It appeared in all its glory on the cover of the show's 1906 Realm, but circus and art lovers were not given the opportunity to purchase an original. Cooke, who retained the copyright, used it to advertise his history of the circus. Cooke's manuscript was never published in book form. If it had been, it appears this would have been the cover.

The circus girl resurfaced again in 1922 and 1923 when she graced the cover of the Ringling-Barnum pro-

grams. As a curious footnote, it appears Andrew Downie, a mid-size circus owner, bought a quantity of this poster not long after it was printed, surely for less than its initial price of a dollar each. Lithographs exist with the titles of his shows, Andrew Downie's Circus (c. 1910) and Walter L. Main (1918-1924), crossed lined near the top, and with the bottom trimmed to eliminate the Barnum and Bailey title, but not the horse's mouth which hangs beneath the bottom edge.

Cooke and Downie had good taste as this lithograph is one of the most beautiful circus images ever created.

Credit is due Bill Biggerstaff who arranged for the color separation, Don Francis who suggested putting this bill on the cover, and the Circus World Museum which owns an original.

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READERS HELP NEEDED

Articles are being prepared on Maynard Bros. Circus, out of Springfield, Massachusetts for a few weeks in 1936 and Card Bros. Circus out of Coventry, Rhode Island for short tours in 1934-35-36. Both were small morotized shows. If you have photos, newspaper ads or anything else on these shows send them to the editor. Material on these shows may have been in the Jim Hoyer collection.

THE PRESIDENT COMENTS

The Circus Historical Society had another great year. We are in the best financial condition in our history, the result of members' generosity at dues time and income from the circusiana auction at the convention. Great credit is due Johann Dahlinger for the superb job she continues to do in managing the financial and administrative affairs of the organization.

The *Bandwagon* reached new highs in 1988 as it published the most pages ever, contained color photography for the first time, and made use of even more cost cutting production meth-

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION as required by 39 U.S.C. 3685.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr., publisher. (9-10-88)

ods. Fred Pfening Jr. continues to render extraordinary service to the CHS.

This coming year promises to be even better. The backlog of articles is still quite strong, and our robust economic health assures that we can continue to publish 44-52 pages issues without raising the dues. Planning is underway for the 1989 convention. Further information will appear in the January-February issue. Fred Pfening III

SEASON'S REVIEW

The annual review of the circus season just ended will appear in the January-February *Bandwagon*. To make it as comprehensive as possible, readers are asked to send photos, information, and clippings relating to the 1988 season to the author. Data relating to smaller shows, school shows, Shrine and fair circuses will be especially appreciated. Material will be returned if specified. Send information to: Fred Pfening III, 2315 Haverford Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43220.

CHRISTMAS

GREETINGS

FRED AND JOHANN

DAHLINGER

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



HERBERT'S HORSES

Part One BY DOROTHY HERBERT

Chronology of Dorothy Herbert's Career.

1925--Gollmar Bros. Circus (late season). Manege; vaultage act with mule and cart with Ray Thompson.

1926--At Dreamland Park, Newark, New Jersey. Manege.

1927--Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West. Manege; learned to trick ride.

1928--Eldridge & Bantum Circus. Manege and Thompson's barnyard pets. Lewis and Zimmerman Circus (Columbus, Ohio). Howard Thurston Magic Show (winter). Disappearing horse.

1929--John Robinson Circus. Manege; novel three horse liberty act.

1930--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. High school waltz and rear; high jumps; broad jump sidesaddle.

1931--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Center ring manege. Presented Satan; jump over hurdle of fire without reins while blindfolded.

1932--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Liberty horse act; zebra act; high school horse finishing with ride down track.

1933--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Manege; jumped Satan over two other horses in Madison Square Garden and Boston Garden; fire jump on road; Roman riding. Appeared in ad for Camel cigarettes.

1934--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Liberty horses; high school horse; hurdle riding; leader of Tommy Atkins' troupe of women riders. Worked with John Helliott on cat act planned for next season. Appeared on program cover.

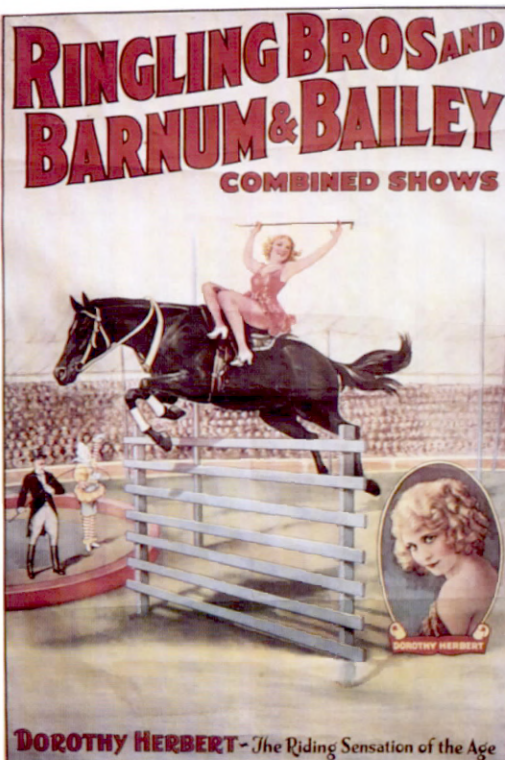
1935--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Hurdle riding and breakneck riding on track; hippodrome races; high school horse and liberty act; led Tommy Atkins' military maids. Shrine date in Chicago during winter. Appeared on Wheaties cereal box.

1936--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. High hurdles on Satan while blindfolded; prone riding while going over fire hurdles; flying swings from saddle horn as rearing horse spun on hind feet on hippodrome track; Mazeppa riding through burning hoops; commissioned Texas Rangerette.

1937--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Ten horse hitch Roman stand-

ing rider; high school; hurdle rider; Mazeppa. Shrine date in Chicago during winter. First Dorothy Herbert CFA Tent organized in Freeport, Illinois.

1938--Cole Bros. Circus. High school riding on Cimarron; waltzing, rearing and fire leaping horse Satan; specialty horse Black Hawk; high hurdle horse, Rex; leading equestrienne with riding and jumping exhibitions at fairs.



The first lithograph featuring Dorothy Herbert was used by the Ringling-Barnum Circus in 1933. Pfening Archives.

1939--Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Over hurdles and through hoops of flame on Sir George; mad cap equestrienne; high school horse; waltzing, rearing and leaping horses; exciting lay backs on rearing horses and fire hurdles; leader of 70 girl riders. Won Billboard poll as favorite outdoor performer.

1940--Cole Bros. Circus. Rider of jumping and reinless horses. Heroine in

Republic Pictures' Mysterious Dr. Satan. Played fairs and rodeos with own horses Black Hawk, King Kong and Rex.

1941--Cole Bros. Circus. Sixteen horse hitch; rider on reinless, prancing Major over fiery barriers amid a herd of leaping horses; high school. Made honorary Oklahoma Ranger.

1942--Lewis Bros. Circus. Six liberty horses presented without use of whip while movements synchronized to music; three horse high school waltz and rear; high jump. Fair dates in fall.

1943--Lewis Bros. Circus. Liberty horses; high school; trained another girl to work with her. Fairs and indoor dates during year.

1944--Bailey Bros. Circus. Early in season chewed up by large monkey and unable to continue with show. Ben Davenport offered her use of his Gonzales, Texas winterquarters. Austin Bros. Circus. Dog act. Joined Harry Leroy to form Roy Bros. and Dorothy Herbert Circus which fell through.

1945--Austin Bros. Circus. Fire leap; dogs. C. R. Montgomery Circus. Liberty horse act. Marriage to A. W. Kennard.

1946--C. R. Montgomery Circus. Liberty horses; high school horses. St. Louis Police Circus. Fair dates for Boyle Woolfolk office.

1947--Garden Bros. Circus. Liberty horses. E. K. Fernandez Circus (winter). Liberty horses and ponies; dogs. At Frank J. Walter's winterquarters in Houston. Fairs for Boyle Woolfolk office.

1948--Clyde Beatty Circus. Jumping horses; dog act; ballet. Does radio and TV publicity.

1949--Clyde Beatty Circus. High jumping and rearing horses; manege; elephant; dogs.

1950--Clyde Beatty Circus. Besides horses worked Harriet Beatty's animals after her death.

1951--Clyde Beatty Circus. High school; elephant; dogs; bally. Radio and TV appearances.

1952--Rudy Bros. Circus. Liberty horses; pony drill; high school; manege; dogs; riding dogs and monkeys.

1953--Clyde Beatty Circus. Liberty act; pony drill; high school dog act.

1954--King Bros. Circus. Rides Cimarron; dog act; rearing horse Silver King. Rudy Bros. Circus in fall and winter. In fall on TV series Dr. Satan on west coast.

1955--King Bros. Circus. Equestrienne.

1955-1961--Bird Wonderland and Zoo.

1961--In movie Bird Man of Alcatraz.

1962-1965--San Francisco Zoo. Rode high school horse Cimarron and was in charge of the baby zoo. Taught circus skills to college students.

1965-1969--Spot dates, some for Rudy Bros. Circus. Fairs and indoors.

1970-1972--Gene Holter Wild Animal Show; spot dates including ones in Alaska.

1971--At Old Milwaukee Days Parade with pony act for Holter.

1972--Retired.

1973--Sold pony drill which had been leased to Parley Baer.

1974--Sold dog act to John Strong, traveling with unit long enough to train girl to work them. Spot date with Earl Tegge's Circus in Chicago.

1976--Organization of second Dorothy Herbert CFA Tent in Clinton, Michigan.

1988--Dorothy Herbert living in retirement in Newbury Park, California.

Prepared by John Daniel Draper.

PROLOGUE

I have been asked many times, "Why don't you write a book? You have many things to tell that might be lost."

To which I responded, "I do not wish to write a book. I have so little time left here I would like to spend it doing what I want to do for me."

"But what about your fans, the people who put you on top, do you owe them nothing?"

"I gave them all I had to give, why can't I now just sit back and rest?"

"Maybe they have a right to know how it all came about and maybe you have a duty to the here/now generation to pass on to them some of the things connected with horse training or riding that were yours alone."

"But what about me? I want to be left to myself. In order to tell these things I must tell more. I would have to recall memories, some of them very unpleasant. Just why should I do this?"

"Because you are a little part of history. A damn little part to be sure, but a part that the future riders of America have the right to know about. Many of



Dorothy Herbert in dancing school in Detroit, Michigan at age 13. Author's collection.

the stunts you have perfected have never been duplicated. Much has been said about what you did, but nothing about how or why."

When I first decided to write this book I thought that I would have a ghost writer. Then it occurred to me that if someone wanted to read something written by a ghost they might better consult a spiritualist and get the information first hand. So, for better or worse, I did it myself.

I am aware that some of my friends are going to say that I forgot to tell about this, that, and the other; however, this is not intended to be an autobiography, it is just a real life story meant to give our young equestrians some clues to training and riding that, I hope, will help them to obtain the goals they are seeking, with a few anecdotes thrown in to help them stay awake in the process.

FOREWORD (OR BACKWARD)

When I started out on these memories, they were intended to be sort of a fun thing, a little memento to leave to my friends so they may have a laugh of two.

In order to see that my wish carried out, it was necessary that I let certain people know of its existence; then, if some points were not quite clear, I could make the necessary corrections.

It has been assembled with mixed emotions, but the general consensus seems to be that it ought to be published now, not at some date in the future. A wide variety of reasons have

been offered, one, that to be made available to the here/now generation so they might make use of the information pertaining to the training of horses. Others think that it might be of interest to the circus fans for its historical value. Most agree that it ought to be printed for no particular reason at all.

CHAPTER 1 HOW DID YOU LEARN?

Mother was born in Kentucky, and she was very proud of that fact. When I was a little girl she used to tell me stories of the Grand Old South: the big plantations there, the beautiful horses, the warmth, laughter, and the wonderful life the people lived. These were the tales that had been told to her by her grandmother. If only the South had not lost the war, this life could have also been hers. Mother was a lady, and she never let you forget it.

My father was a descendant of hard working farmers from Illinois, who, through the sweat of their brow, had cleared and tilled the land until they saw the fruits of their labor, and prospered. My grandmother on my father's side is the only one I heard mention anything of note regarding her roots. She once remarked about her kinship with Victor Herbert, the composer.

I, too, was born in Kentucky and that is where I lived when I was young. When people asked how I learned to ride, I used to like to say: "Oh, I was raised with horses."

Only they were not our horses, they belonged to someone else. I would spend hours exercising them, and the owner, Colonel Reagan, who no longer rode himself but was a well known breeder, was pleased to have the free help. Then one day he hired a new trainer who did not like the idea at all. He asked if they were not afraid that I would ruin the horses. The owner said that he could not see that I was hurting anything. The trainer replied: "And I can't see where she is helping anything either; but, if she is going to continue to ride these horses she is going to do it right."

There were no more romps around the track, bareback and barefoot. I was given an English saddle, a two rein bridle, and was obliged to wear boots. So, instead of just exercising, I learned from the trainer how to put the horses through their paces. Later on, when the trainer felt I was ready, he allowed me to ride some of them in horse shows. There is a real thrill in taking a horse through the five gaits without making a mistake.

Then we went to live in Detroit, Michigan. The only horses I ever saw there were those ridden by the mounted policemen.

My mother and father had separated, not divorced, just a parting of the ways. This was to happen to them many, many times. I was attending school and Mother was holding down a job as a sales lady in a department store. I was also going to dancing school, and I loved it.

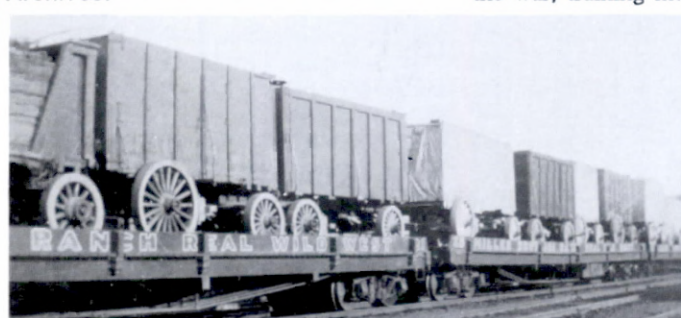
One day, after the dance class, they announced that a big spectacle was coming to town and they were going to need some extra dancing girls for the production numbers. The following week a man would be around to choose, and anyone he picked, if they wished, could be in the show. Costumes would be furnished and they would also be paid a salary.

I was one of those picked and Mother went with me to sign up. While there, she was offered a job as an extra in the mob scenes. The play was Duffield's famous *Rome Under Nero*. It was held in a huge stadium, complete with chariot races, and it finished with a spectacular fireworks display depicting the burning of Rome.

One of the numbers was a military drill on horseback by the Roman gladiators. They were short of riders and asked if any of us had ever had any experiences with horses. I raised my hand.


Just before the show closed the man who was furnishing some of the horses asked Mother if she and I would like to join his troop. He had several girls working for him whom he was teaching to ride trained horses, but he could use a couple more. Mother thought this might be more interesting than going

Baggage wagons on the train of the the 101 Ranch Wild West show during the period Dorothy was there. Pfening Archives.





Mr. Ray Thompson
"The Man that Rides"



Mrs. Ray Thompson
"Queen of the Side Saddle"

**RAY THOMPSON'S
DANCING HORSES**



FEATURING
Thompson's Famous
High School Horses
Jumping Horses
Liberty Acts

Tandem and
Random Teams
Trick Horses, Ponies, Mules
and
Novel Feats of Horsemanship
1-7-27
En-Route, Jeffersonville Ind.
1918 & 8th St.

Ray Thompson used this letterhead in writing to Orrin Davenport in January 1927. Pfening Archives.

back to the department store, so we went with this outfit to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where we went into training.

Every so often we would go off to play a date somewhere, usually a fair. My mother and all of the other girls rode the manege horses, but I was picked to ride the comedy mule. I had to wear a clown suit and clown make-up and perform what was called a "January Act." People thought it was very funny, but it wasn't funny to me. At one point you fall down and the mule backs up and sits on you. The number finished with the mule jumping over hurdles and you vault on and off as he goes over the jump.

I have never talked about my early training. I do not like to think about it. People like to hear pleasant things, I learned long ago to tell them what they like to hear.

Fact of the matter, I learned the hard way from one of the cruelest of all trainers, Ray Thompson. He was also considered the greatest of horse trainers at that time. He and his troop had twice been called to England for command performances before the King and Queen. He had been an officer during the war, training men for the cavalry.

He would work a horse and rider until both were ready to drop. If a mistake was made, the lash whip would often miss the horse and hit the rider instead. He was a rather small man with a sort of a one-sided smile,

rather like a sneer. One of his eyes was disfigured and impaired causing him to sometimes squint when talking to you. A horse had reared up and hit him in the face with his front hoof; the same horse that he had blinded in one eye while he was training it. People who disliked him, and there were many, called it just retribution.

His idol was James Fillis, who had been *Ecuyer En Chef* to the Central Calvary School at St. Petersburg. He was acknowledged throughout

Europe as the greatest high school rider of all time. He had the honor of giving private riding exhibitions before the Emperor and Empress of Germany, the Tsar of Russia, the Queen of Belgium, and the Emperor of Austria. I was presented with a book by Fillis and had to study it every day. Ray, himself, had been trained by Rhoda Royal, a past master in the art of dressage.

Ray claimed that the bit and spurs in the hands of an amateur were like a knife and a sword in the hands of an idiot. My legs at that time were not quite long enough to touch the horse in the proper place to cue him right; nevertheless, the stirrups were kept long. The spurs that I used were taped so that I would not accidentally hit the horse with a sharp rowel. At first the stirrups were hobbled under the horse's belly to keep my legs in the right position.

My hands were another matter; they quickly learned to stay in place after a few cracks on the knuckles.

The extra-long stirrups were uncomfortable. When riding the gaited horses I had been allowed to have them at a comfortable length in order to post on the trot. In high school this was not allowed. For a very long time I rode horses that were also being trained. They learned to respond to the bit and spur as I learned how to use them.

When I was considered capable, I was given a horse that was completely trained, Black Artist. He was the second best horse in the stable. The best, Kentucky Man, Ray reserved for himself. No one else was allowed to ride him.

Looking over this chapter, I have a feeling that you will get the impression that I was quite stupid to be so long catching up with the rest of the troop, and just now getting into the act. I feel then the necessity to explain at this point the difference between high school and manege.

Ray was breaking horses for circus and other trainers. They liked the results of his training, but did not like to have him on their shows on account of his fiery temper and his methods of training.

The manege horses were the ones that were being trained to go on a circus. These horses were broke to waltz, march, get on a pedestal, side pass, and lie down and sit up. They are cued with a whip and anyone can learn to work them with a few days instructions.

A high school horse is a different matter all together, and this is what I was being trained for. The horse responds to bit and spur and the pressure of your legs. Distribution of your body weight also plays a part.

In conjunction with all the things a manege horse is taught to do, a well trained high school horse will side-step on the trot, do the Spanish trot, see-saw piaffer, the rock, the fore-hand, the high extended trot, and rear with the front legs pawing in the air. All this is done without the aid of a whip. Even with one knee and the camel stretch, no whip is carried.

At this time I was also given two Shetland ponies to train so that I might "learn from the ground up." This was good reasoning for at that time I would not have been able to handle the big horses from the ground, but would know how to do so later.

Now, I do not intend to make an ass out of myself by trying to tell anyone how to train a horse through the mail or by the printed page. Many books have been written on the subject--most of them stink.

When I was with the circus, many times some one would ask, "How do you train a horse?" Run through that again and you will see how inane it actually is. Still it required an answer of some sort, and I am sure that the ones I gave were as silly as the question.

Then one day, while standing in the horse tent feeding my horses some apples, a man holding a little boy by the hand sprung it on me again.

"Pardon me, Miss, but would you mind telling me how do you train a horse?" Before I could think up a dumb answer, the little boy looked up at him and said: "Which horse to do what, Papa?" That was the answer that I had been hunting for for years.

But, back to the time I was first learning. The two ponies that were is-

sued to me had to learn to get on a pedestal, waltz, change the ring, lie down, and sit up and rear. I was instructed what to do, but would break them myself. Later on they were put into a pony drill along with six others. The girl who was riding the waltzing, rearing horse left the troop to get married and each of us were given a chance to try out for her job. None of the other girls were very interested in learning to ride sidesaddle. It was not hard for me, as I had good balance, so I was taught to do the waltz and rear, and the lay back.



Dorothy Herbert appeared with the Eldridge & Bentum Great European Circus during the winter of 1928. The performing personnel is shown in Iceland in New York City. Pfening Archives.

Someone else had inherited the comedy mule and I no longer had to put on make-up and take prat falls.

I had seen jumping horses at the horse shows and, while I admired the courage of the riders, I could not help but think what a chance it was to take just to win a cup or a ribbon. I never dreamed that one day I would sit atop one of them.

As I said before, when Ray Thompson was not on the road with his own stock, he trained a lot for other people. He received now an order for six jumpers. We were told when the horses arrived that three of us girls would be expected to train two apiece.

When I got up on my first jumper I found that my stirrups were up short. It gave me a feeling of safety. I rode him around for quite a while to get the feel of him and he of me. When they put the hurdle up the first time you could have almost stepped over it. This was to give me confidence. I was shown how to bridge my reins (cross them over the horse's neck, lean on them and thus interfere no way with his head when he was taking the jump).

After my first time over the hurdle,

like your first dive into the water, I felt no fear. We jumped a few more times that day and each time the bar was raised a little higher, but not too high, I assure you. Nevertheless, when I dismounted my legs were trembling.

Before long we were going higher and higher and I now realized the thrill the jumping horse riders in the horse shows felt when they showed their mounts.

During these sessions I topped two horses, I will mention only one. People in my age bracket may remember

Ten Minutes to Midnight, who went on to fame as a high jumper. What did I gain by all of this? Well, I overcame my fear of jumping horses and came to love them. The thrill of riding jumpers never leaves you. It is like a gambler, always taking one more chance.

There are two methods that I liked best to use. If possible, I always liked to train the horse and rider together. When training a horse for myself, I worked it from the ground

with a breaking rigging first and then rode them after the the trick had been completed using the long reins.

The book by James Fillis is excellent--if you have someone that knows what he is doing right there to coach you as you go along.

But I fear I am getting ahead of my story.

When the owners came to look over their jumpers they were quite impressed, not only with them but with Ray Thompson's trained horses as well, and hired the troop to travel with them. This is how we happened to join Colonel Zack Miller's 101 Ranch Wild West Show.

The show was presented in a huge portable amphitheater, with canopies over the seats to protect the customers. The cowboys, cowgirls and the Indians were at the mercy of the elements.

The arena, seats, corrals, etc. were put up by the working crew, but it was up to the personnel to get the stock back and forth from the trains. This meant getting up early, riding and leading horses to the lot. The steers and calves were herded down the streets by the cowboys. Let me interject here that, if one is inclined to learn from the bottom rung of the ladder upwards, I can think of no better place than a traveling Wild West show to do so.

We ran into a problem right at the start. As with all railroad shows, space

was at a premium. The girls were expected to double up in the sleeping cars. I had always been a restless sleeper and at the slightest touch would jump right up. Neither I or whoever had the bad luck to sleep with me had a chance of getting any rest.

I suppose the fact that I was riding a featured high school horse, doing the waltz and rear, and topping their prize jumper, Ten Minutes to Midnight, had a lot to do with it; but I was given a berth alone.

There were eight of us girls in the manege high school number. We were also required to wear old fashioned wardrobe and to participate in the stage coach hold-up, burning of the covered wagon, and a couple of other numbers. It was new, it was exciting, but compared with future events it had little impact on my life.

The act which I liked best of all in the show was the trick riders. I struck up a friendship with the one I most admired and he offered to teach me. He had a beautiful black and white pinto pony with a gait as smooth as a flowing brook. I learned to vault, split the neck, do a fender drag and stand in the saddle.

Ray, as a boss, usually did not come down to the lot until around noon. He would go to town in the morning for breakfast, go to a hotel and read the morning papers and arrive after everything was in order for the matinee. Then one morning he came early to check one his horses which had gone lame and saw me trick riding.

He said that, in his opinion, trick riding was very unlady-like. I told him that I thought riding a mule had been unlady-like, too. Whereupon he informed me that I was engaged to ride horses, not to think.

After the show closed and we got back to winter quarters, Ray booked several horses out to work on different dates. Mother was sent out with a single horse to play in a show that worked in theaters on the stage. While playing in Cincinnati, she and Dad got back together again and when the show date was over she sent the horse back and stayed with him.

Because I was light and had a good seat in the saddle, it became my job to top all of the new jumpers. Besides being lonesome in quarters, I was getting fed up with riding all of the green horses that were in training, and the first chance that I got, I left and went home to stay with Mother and Dad.

It was nice to be a family again. Dad had always been fun to be with and he went out of his way now as though he was making up for lost time. He taught

me how to ice skate and how to use a bow and arrows. He continued where we had left off, with little thought that I might have grown up during the interval.

Then one day Mother said to me: "Pack up your things, we are leaving." No explanation. We went back to Detroit, just she and I.

CHAPTER 2 HOWARD THURSTON

One day Mother decided that she would like to go visit her aunt who lived in Indiana. Mother's aunt had a little farm, and Mother just raved about it, "Oh, to get out of the city and have a home of my own like hers."

Since I was so close to Louisville, Kentucky, just twenty-eight miles, I drove over to visit my friends the Reagans, who had put me on my first horse. They were very happy to see me and after showing me around, which included seeing their new horses and colts, they asked what I was up to.



In 1928 Dorothy Herbert appeared with the Howard Thurston magic show. Pfening Archives.

I explained that the show had closed for the winter and that I was at liberty. They suggested that I contact Howard Thurston, the magician, who was looking for a rider to work with his show. The Reagans made a phone call and set me up with an appointment the following day. I stayed with them overnight and went to Mr. Thurston's hotel the next morning.

Howard Thurston was quite successful, he had his own railroad cars with sleepers; and two baggage cars, one for props, scenery, and other paraphernalia

used in his show, the other for the animals used in his illusions.

A large number of people traveled with the show, including two sets of girl twins and a set of boy twins. Upon arrival in town the twins separated and went to different hotels; thus, no outsider would ever see a set together. There were also several sets of animals, but since most of them were kept in the basement of the theater, this made no difference as no one saw them there.

Abdell, a Hindu, was responsible for the success of many of Thurston's illusions, although he was never on stage. He did all of his work behind the scenes. Unless you were directly involved with a certain presentation, you were not allowed backstage; you stayed in your dressing room.

Thurston's show did not work on Sundays. Everything was packed up and loaded after Saturday's last performance and moved to the next town. The crew, together with the local stage hands, worked all day Sunday getting things ready for the Monday show. It was said that no one else in show business cut up a stage like Thurston, with all the trap doors necessary for his illusions.

The feature of the show this year was the "Vanishing Horse and Rider." The white stallion used in this production had been trained in Europe and brought to this country at great expense. It did what we today call a dressage act but, at that time, it was better known as a high school act. The horse had acted up during a performance and deposited the rider in the orchestra pit. The rider had suffered a broken leg and other injuries and would not be able to work for quite some time.

As arranged, I met Mr. Thurston in the lobby of his hotel. I was seated in a chair when he walked up. I may have been predisposed from having looked at the lithographs prominently displayed in the lobby, where he was shown wearing a long black cape, staring straight ahead, his arms outstretched, and surrounded by bats and ghosts. When he first looked at me, I felt a chill. He had the most penetrating eyes I was ever to see. Several times during the performance he was supposed to hypnotize his subjects. I later learned that this was just play-acting, but I never got over the feeling that, if he had so desired, he could hypnotize a person for real.

He asked me to stand up and turn around. I could see that he was disappointed. "I have been hearing from your friends how you are able to handle horses, but I am afraid that I will take a little more convincing."

It was plain to see that he had expected something more than a hundred-and-five pound slip of a girl.

"However," he continued, "I will give you a chance. Go down to the stable and see what you can do with that horse and then let my manager know. I do not have the time to fool with all this; although I do have a lot of money tied up in the illusion and I wish to keep it in the show."

I got directions, and drove to the stable where this unruly horse was being kept. They called him White Cloud. He was cross-tied in his stall and had hobbles on his hind legs, which indicated that he kicked. They had a muzzle on him which meant he bit. He also had a big pot belly which could only mean that he was very much in need of exercise. With great caution, and a lot of misgivings, I undid all of the bondages and led the horse into the exercise arena in conjunction with the stall they were renting. I put a bridle on him before I released him, and attached a long lunge rope to it.

When I let him loose, he went wild! He bucked and kicked and reared, but after a time, he laid down and rolled. I picked up the lash whip and kept him going for a long time, until all of the play was out of him. After which I went through the "let's be friends bit" with apples and carrots.

The groom appeared about this time. He did not understand a word of English, and neither did the horse. I, of course, was anxious to know what the horse had been trained to do. The pantomime must have been hilarious. Picture, if you can, me marching like a horse, going down on one knee and the groom nodding "yes." Then I was suddenly waltzing, going through the side pass and the lay down, as he caught on to the game. We were both laughing like crazy when I motioned for him to put the saddle on the horse. The horse was frisky but willing to work, now that he had been exercised. I found that he did an excellent high school act.

Early the next morning, we took the horse to the theater and practiced with him on the mat; then I called Mr. Thurston's manager and announced that we were ready for the audition. The manager and Mr. Thurston watched us go through the act and then called for the prop hands to bring out the crate.

"Now," the manager explained, "after you are finished with your act, you take a bow and ride the horse into the crate. You and the horse will be lifted to the top of the stage. After saying a few words, Mr. Thurston will fire a gun, and you and the horse will both disappear."

I was then turned over to the wardrobe

mistress, who was instructed to put together a couple of costumes for me. The wardrobe was to be all black or all white, and I was required to wear a black wig. This was on Saturday and she agreed to spend all day Sunday working on my outfit.

It was arranged that I would meet them in their next town. I drove back and told my mother the good news: I



Jess Adkins, right, and Zack Terrell were the managers Dorothy first met after arriving in Peru in the spring of 1929. Pfening Archives.

had a job. We had not brought much luggage with us, because we had only intended to spend a couple of days. Mother said that as soon as she got back she would go through my things and forward what she thought I might need. She drove me to the station, and I caught the train to join Thurston's Magic Show.

I never did understand quite how the stunt worked. When Mr. Thurston fired the gun, there was lot of white smoke, like a mist, around us. The crate fell to the stage and the horse and I were left dangling in mid-air. The curtain closed, and Mr. Thurston went out and took a bow. The number closed the second half of the show, after which there was an intermission, at which time the horse and I were lowered down to the stage. It took several men to crank the mechanism that pulled us up and down. One day it failed and they could not get us back down to the stage and there we hung, all through the third act. Needless to say, all of those below were nervous throughout the balance of the show. When the show was over, I was very happy to get back on the ground.

The accommodations were great, you stayed in the best hotels, signed for

your meals, and the salary was adequate—but I was very lonesome. I did not know what to do with myself most of the time. The rest of the cast had nothing in common with me, and I was quite alone. When they traveled to the next town in the private train, they would all have a lot of fun, enjoy a few drinks, something to eat, then retire to their compartments. I would sit in the corner and watch all of the fun and, after they were all gone, I would pick up a couple of sandwiches and go to my compartment.

I was glad when the Thurston show closed its season.

CHAPTER 3 MY FIRST CAR

Mother and I were living in an apartment in Detroit. Dad was sending mother money to live on, they were separated again at this time. I was working in a department store to help pay the expenses. I was just a teenager and, as usual, I was lying about my age in order to have a job, and I did look older.

I decided to surprise my mother and buy a used car. The salesman was very kind and took me out for a short drive and showed me how to shift the gears on the little car I had selected, a coupe with a rumble seat.

I shelled out all of my hard earned cash, signed some papers, and the salesman promised he would deliver it the next day. I had told him what time I would be home from work and when he arrived I was on the front sidewalk waiting for him. I thanked him and, as he and another man who was following him in another car drove away, I rushed upstairs and told my mother that I had something to show her. After looking it over, we got in to go for a drive. Nothing happened. The salesman had showed me how to shift the gears but not how to start the thing. It was too late to get hold of him by then.

The next day I phoned him and he gave me all of the necessary information. When I got it started and was about to drive off mother asked me if he had told me how to stop it. He had.

Came Sunday, my day off, and it was warm and sunny. Mother said that she would like to go to the park and play golf. I told her that I would take her and pick her up whatever time she wished. Golf did not interest me, so I never played.

After leaving Mother off, I started home. I was not sure which way I ought to go so I turned around and headed back the way I had come. Pretty soon an officer on a motorcycle pulled me over to the side and asked if I were un-

able to read. I was going the wrong way on a one way street.

I told him that I had seen the sign but hadn't the faintest idea what to do about it. He then told me that he would suggest that I back up and turn the car around. I told him that I had not learned to do that yet. (Wonder what would happen if something like that were to occur today?)

He parked his motorcycle on the grass out of the way, got in the car and taught me how to drive, including the hand signals used in those days. I never forgot him and what he never knew was, from that time on, if I was ever in any kind of difficulty I always ran to the police for help.

One evening while reading *Billboard*, the showman's magazine, I saw an ad where they were in need of people for several shows in Peru, Indiana. Not knowing what to expect when I arrived there, I, nevertheless, packed my bags, put them in the car, said goodbye for now and started out. Before I left, Mother told me that if I were lucky and landed a job that I would no doubt be gone all summer, so she would go to Cincinnati and live there where she would be near some of her relations.

On arriving in Peru, I checked into a hotel and the next day drove out to the winter quarters. After wandering around awhile I entered one of the offices. I didn't bother to look at the sign on the door to see which one it was. It wouldn't have mattered, I didn't know one from the other anyway. Several men, looking important, were seated behind desks. One of them asked what I wanted. I told him a job was what I had in mind.

"Then the man you wish to see is Mr. Zack Terrell here," he said.

He was a rather heavy-set man with a serious look. They called him Simon Legree behind his back of course, but I am sure that he knew of it and was secretly pleased. He was in no way lame but he carried a cane at all times. It seemed like it was part of his wardrobe. He used it to emphasize any point he wished to make. It found its way to many heads, though I thought he might have chosen a better spot.

He could glare at a person and make him feel guilty whether he was or not. Nevertheless, I liked and admired him very much and I had only one disagreement all of the time that I knew him.

"Well, now," said Zack Terrell of the Sells-Floto Circus, as he pulled out some kind of a form, "What is your name and just what can you do? Can you sing?"

I told him my name and shook my head no to his question.



Dorothy Herbert shortly after she arrived in the Peru, Indiana winterquarters of the American Circus Corporation. Pfening Archives.

"Can you work on the swinging ladder?" Since I had never seen one, I reckoned that I couldn't.

"How about web or iron jaw? Ever work with elephants? Can you walk a wire?" I just kept shaking my head to every question.

"Not very versatile, are you? Just what can you do?"

I did not know at the time, but they were all just having fun. Mr. Terrell had heard of me and wanted to see what my reaction would be. "Well, I can ride horses," I flung over my shoulder as I headed for the door, "but I seem to be in the wrong place for that."

"Hold on there. Suppose you go out to the ring barns and ask for John Smith, our horse trainer, and see what he thinks about it."

Their laughter rang in my ears as I slammed the door behind me. When I presented myself to John Smith, I was so mad I decided that I would ride whatever they put me on, no matter what; and that was my attitude for many years to come. I would show them, even if I broke my neck trying.

John and I got along just great. John was one of the best of trainers, but he was fed up with having to break in every girl that they sent to him; some had never been close to a horse. Then I came along, not only able to ride but willing to assist him in training the horses he was breaking. Needless to say, the best trained horses were mine for the asking.

I soon made friends with the other girls who were there practicing. We all lived in town, of course, and since I

was the only one who had a car we all shared the ride. We split the expense of the gas.

Since the car was pretty old to begin with, it wasn't long before it started to go to pieces. It became necessary to use a crank to get her started and, since she was mine, I was privy to having the honor.

Either because no one had told us or we did not have the money for it, we had no spare tire. If we had a flat tire we used something called a cold patch and took turns on the hand pump.

The radiator began to leak so it was necessary to carry a bucket of water and stop when we were half way there to fill it. Then the brakes gave out and in order to stop it you would throw it in reverse. However, we went merrily along.

Then one day a man from the front office rushed into the ring barn where we were working. "Who owns that coupe parked outside? There isn't another car on the place and it is too late to call a cab to come out from town. Mr. Mugivan has to catch a train. Will whoever owns it get him there?"

I got into my car, drove to the office and picked up Mr. Jerry Mugivan and his luggage. He was a rather large, imposing looking man, all business. Beautifully dressed and very out of place in my little rattletrap car. I know that he must have remembered his ride for a very long time. Half way to the station, the car was steaming so badly that you couldn't see, so I pulled over to the side of the road, got out and put in some water, which bubbled up all over the place.

"Young lady," said he, as I stepped back into the car, "can't you hurry, we will miss the train."

I stepped on the gas, gave her all she had, and when the station was in sight and the train coming I could not stop. I ran her into the signal light and threw her in reverse.

"Thanks for the ride," gasped Mr. Mugivan, "but have you never heard of a garage?"

"Have you heard, sir, that we don't get paid in winter quarters--just our meals."

A few days later one of the show mechanics came and got my car and took it into their workshop and gave it a complete overhauling. After that she drove like a dream, or, at least, less like a nightmare.

Why do I go on so about my first car? Because it was so much a part of all that happened.

Now it came time to go on the road. All of us girls were advised to report to the office to sign a contract for the season. After reading mine I said: "Mr.

Terrell, there is only one thing that I would like added: I would like to have a lower berth alone. I have been told that due to a shortage of space that some of the girls are required to double up. This will not do."

"Of course," said Mr. Terrell, "we have been receiving great reports from John Smith in regard to your ability and we want you to be happy on our show."

The next morning I checked out of the hotel, put my car in storage and took a taxi to the train. I set down my bags and went wandering down the aisles of the sleeping cars looking for a berth with my name on it and when I located it, I found there was another girl in it.

"Hi," she said, "we are to be room-mates for the season, which side of the berth do you want?"

I mumbled something and flew out to the runs where they were having the usual trouble loading the train for the first time out. I located Mr. Terrell and the following conversation ensued.

"Mr. Terrell, there is another girl in my bed."

"What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing that I know of, but I will not sleep with her."

"Why not?"

"Well, would you?"

"Certainly not! Wait. Just sleep with her tonight and we will settle this tomorrow in the next town."

I went to some of the friends that I had made on the show and asked them to get my trunk out of the trunk wagon and see that it got to the railroad station. I went back to where I had left my luggage, found a cab, and returned to the hotel.

The next morning I went to the railway station to have my trunk shipped home. It had never been delivered to the station, so I got my car out of the garage and drove out to winter quarters to see if anyone there might know something about it. Zack Terrell's office was closed, of course, so I went over to the next one and asked if anyone had noticed a stray trunk anywhere.

"Why, yes, young lady," said Mr. Jess Adkins, manager of the John Robinson Circus, "I am sure I saw one of my men put it in that big, red baggage wagon a while ago."

Jess Adkins. He was tall, white haired with twinkling blue eyes and most of the time he was talking to you, you got the impression that he was laughing at some secret joke that he did not care to share. In retrospect, I would say that he looked very much like the now-famous Colonel Saunders, though I am

sure that he never plucked a chicken in his life.

"I understand," he continued, "that you are heading for Cincinnati. Did you know that it is the town that we are to open in? If you like, you may ride there on our train. I am sure that we will be able to find a lower berth for you--alone."



Dorothy Herbert worked on the John Robinson Circus with Rudy Rudynoff in 1929. Pfening Archives.

I knew that he could not come right out and offer me a job when I had just blown a sister show with no notice.

So I said, "Would I get the same salary?"

"Indeed," he answered, with a twinkle in his eye. "We might even do a little better."

"Well, then, suppose you keep my trunk and I will drive through and meet you there. My mother is in Cincinnati and I think she might like to have my car."

I made the drive without incident, thanks to the man in winter quarters who fixed my car. I found where mother was staying; bathed, changed my clothes, and went to the show grounds. The tent was up when I went to report to my new boss. My trunk was in the ladies dressing room and it looked like I was all set.

I found Mr. Adkins under the big top and he told me: "Our horse trainer should be here shortly. He has been playing some indoor dates. Tell him who you are and that you are to ride a horse named Lilly. You will finish the manege act with a waltz and rear. He will show you the cues."

Everyone was very busy rushing to

get ready for the forthcoming show. I went and sat in the seats to be out of the way.

Rudy Rudynoff walked into the tent; he looked like something out of a men's fashion magazine. Derby hat, white gloves, a smart suit, and, of all things, spats. It was plain to see that he was from Europe.

I walked over to him and gave him Mr. Adkins' message. His reaction was anything but what I expected.

"Oh, you are going to ride Lilly, are you? And do the waltz and rear? Well, I have spent a lot of time breaking that horse from rearing. Good luck to you!" And with that he turned on his heels and walked away.

Boiling mad, I went to the ring stock boss, whom I had already met in Peru at the winter quarters and asked him if he knew of anyone who might help me. He suggested that I talk to one of the other trainers who worked the liberty horses and was also familiar with the manege horses. "Alabama" Campbell was lean, long, and lanky. He kept to himself and had little or nothing to say to anyone. He was a capable enough horseman, but too serious to ever be an outstanding showman. I never saw him smile. He was quite helpful, however. He went with me to a vacant lot behind the tent and we worked with Lilly. I must admit that the outcome wasn't too good.

Later on in the day, when we lined up our horses to be issued our places in the manege number, Rudynoff assigned me to a spot at the far end of the tent facing the blues: a section that was last to be filled. With a small house on tear-down nights, these seats were removed before the show was half over and you were playing to no one.

At the matinee I was boiling mad, and the more I rode, the madder I became. When the number was at last over and I was scheduled to do the waltz and rear, I had not only myself but the horse in a frenzy. She reared all over the place. After a short bow we dashed out of the tent and I started to jump off. Just as I did she reared again and, of course, I fell--right at the feet of two gentlemen. A short time later Mr. Rudynoff called me out of the dressing tent and said: "I want you to know that this is not my idea, but tonight you will work in the center ring. Also, at the end of the waltz and rear, you will jump your horse into the ring, dismount and take a bow."

Mother and some of my relations came to the show that night and I guess I hammed it up. Anyway, I got a nice hand and was feeling sort of smug. That

didn't last long. Rudynoff caught up with me as I started into the dressing tent.

"That horse is just excited and worked up, but it won't last. She will stop rearing as soon as she quiets down; and, as for you, anyone would think that you were deliberately trying to break your neck. You don't even look to see where the poles are on the track. If I were you I would quit while I was still in one piece. You are not much of a rider."

I flew into the dressing room and started to bawl. I was in the midst of packing my trunk to leave the show when Eva Lewis, wife of the famous clown Joe Lewis, came running over to me. "Dorothy, who do you think wants to talk to you? Pat Valdo."

"Well, who is he? I never heard of him. Besides, I don't want to talk to anybody."

I walked out of the tent and there he was, standing where he could not have missed hearing everything that was said. "Miss Herbert, we would like to have you with the Ringling Brothers Circus. I guess you have heard of them, even if you haven't heard of me. Now there is someone out here who wishes to meet you. May I present Mr. John Ringling."

I remembered him at once. He was one of the men who had been standing at the back door when I had taken my buster off Lilly at the matinee; then Pat Valdo must have been the man who was with him.

About that time my mother walked up and said she was ready to go home. I introduced her to them and told her I would only be a moment while I closed my trunk. When I came out of the dressing room, Mr. Ringling and Pat Valdo were still there. I told Mother to wait until I got the car.

"I heard you say you have a car," said Pat Valdo, "I wonder if you would be kind enough to drive us to the railroad station? We could talk on the way."

Before I could answer, Mother, who was all agog over meeting John Ringling, chimed in, "We would be glad to."

She didn't know what I had done. I had removed the cushion from the back seat in order to have more room to take my things to the show train. When I returned to with the car, Mr. Valdo had somehow got Mr. Ringling and himself into the rumble seat and I delivered them to the station. With the top down and the wind blowing there was no chance for conversation.

Before they left, Pat Valdo pointed out all the advantages of being with the "Big One." I, in turn, explained that if

I were unable to cope *here*, I sure did not wish to try it *there*. I wasn't sure that I wanted to stay in the circus business at all. He then told me to stick it out, learn all that I could and when I felt that I was ready, to let them know.



This photo of Dorothy Herbert on Lilly was used for publicity by the John Robinson show in 1929. Author's collection.

We played in Cincinnati for three days and when we left town the car stayed with my mother. She later traded it in on a new one. Throughout the years I have had many cars; cars that I cannot even remember, but your first car is like your first love—you can never forget it.

Neither could John Ringling. I recall him saying one day many months later as he stepped out of his chauffeur driven limousine, "Dorothy, do you still have that car of yours with the lovely rumble seat?"

CHAPTER 4 THE JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS

My horse Lilly continued to work well. I had also become very good friends with Rudy Rudynoff. I made it a point never to mention any other trainer's name to Rudy, or that someone else had taught me to do it a different way. I did this not only with Rudy, but with every other trainer that I worked with over the years.

After we had been on the road for a few weeks, Mr. Adkins called Rudynoff

into his office and told him that he would like me to work the palomino liberty horse act. Inasmuch as there were no women in the country working liberty horses, Mr. Adkins was eager that I learn.

Rudynoff was very exact in his teaching. "First," he said, "you have to learn how to handle whips. We spent many hours in the ring with the whips. Rudy would place pieces of paper at different points in the ring and I would have to hit them from the front or back, high or low. Rudy explained that the horse must be hit on the chest, the back or under the belly. This training paid off as I never hit a horse in the eye with a whip in my life, which cannot be said for many trainers.

The act Rudy taught me was a take off on the old Johnny Agee "brewery act," which traveled all over the country advertising beer, as do the Budweiser horses today. It consisted of three palominos. Three barrels were placed in the ring and each of the horses would jump in a barrel, stop, turn around, go the other way of the ring and then back again. The next time when they had reached their respective barrels they waltzed three times, then out and around again. This time, when they were in their respective places, they would lie down and sit up. This was quite effective with their heads and neck sticking out of the barrel. For the finish they all stood on their hind legs in their barrel.

Late in the season, one of the men who worked one of the liberty acts in the end ring while Rudynoff worked his spotted liberty horses in the center ring, was injured, and Rudy asked me to take his place. I was quite flattered and made it a special point to work the horses just like he taught me.

Rudynoff was considered the foremost liberty horse trainer in the business. He was very flashy in the ring and his showmanship was superb. As a former bareback rider, he would often end his act by jumping from the ground to the back of the last liberty horse and turning a back flip to the ground.

One day the riding act was short a whip-master and one of the principal lady riders asked if I would help out by being the whip-master. After watching her for several days, I decided that I wanted to be a bareback rider. I told this to Rudy and he said: "Fine, when we go into winter quarters I will find a suitable horse to train for you and I will teach you. My wife Erna was a great rider and I know that she will be happy to help teach you." Erna was not traveling with the show as they had a

young son and she was staying home while he was in school.

I thought that I was very lucky to have such excellent teachers, but it was not to be.

In those days a few weeks before the show closed, management put up a small tent in the backyard, called each act in, and signed those they were going to retain for the coming season. By ones and twos the acts filed in and out. I waited and waited but I was not sent for, and soon the little tent was no longer in the back yard. So, a couple of days before the show closed I went to see Mr. Adkins. "Tell me what is wrong, wasn't I good enough to be asked back?"

He looked at me and, for once, there was no twinkle in his eye. He said: "Dorothy, you know better than that. I would love to have you back, you have been great. I will have a long talk with you later."

That very day I received a wire from Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus, signed by Pat Valdo, offering me a job with that show. I went to straight to Mr. Adkins and showed him the wire.

He shook his head and said: "So, now you know."

I said: "Well, I certainly don't want to go there. I would like to stay here."

"Sit down, Dorothy, and let me tell you what happened. The Ringlings have bought out the American Circus Corporation. We do not know which of the shows they will continue to put out on the road. From now on the performers will not be able to pick and choose which show they would like to be with, they will go where they are put. Rudynoff, by the way, is being transferred to the Sells-Floto Circus, and he is not a bit happy about it. You had better do as they say if you want to stay in the circus business."

The season had gone by all too quickly. I had made many friends and they were now all busy making plans for the winter months. Most of them had their own acts and would continue working. I did not answer Pat Valdo's wire, and walked out of the tent on closing day without looking back.

I bought a ticket for Cincinnati. As the train pulled away I started to cry; I had a feeling that things would never be the same again. They never were.

CHAPTER 5 RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY

It seemed like the train ride from Cincinnati to Ringling's Sarasota winter-quarters took forever. I rode in the

coach. After sitting up all the way, I was very tired and dirty when I arrived. Pat Valdo met me at the station and said that he had arranged for me to room with a private family, as hotels were in short supply and very expensive.

I spent the rest of that day getting cleaned up and resting. The next day I was taken out to winter quarters and introduced to Frank Asher, who was in charge of the manege horses.

Frank informed me that all of the good horses were already taken, riders from the past season having first choice. They finally gave me some sort of a mount, who balked at every trick. When I put the pressure on to try to make him work, he took the bit and ran away with me. When I saw that I could not stop him, I let him run; then, when he got tired and tried to stop, I made him run some more. When we got back to the practice arena the horse was in a lather. All of the other riders were lined up having a big laugh.



John Ringling saw Dorothy Herbert on the Robinson circus in 1929 and asked her to join the Ringling-Barnum show. Pfening Archives.

For the next few days I fooled around, doing nothing. Then they sent for me to report to the office. They asked why I was not practicing with the rest of the girls, and I told them that there did not seem to be a horse available.

I was told to go back and look all of the horses over and to let them know which one I would like to have. Mr. John Ringling had brought me there himself, and he intended to feature me.

Of course, word of this soon got around and I was about as popular as

the seven year itch. I did not blame the girls at all. I wanted so much to make friends and this was sure not the way to start. I just would not even look at someone else's horse.

A couple of days later, not knowing what to do next, I began wandering around the winter quarters. I happened to pass by a corral where a bunch of skinny horses were penned up. I asked one of the hands what the horses were used for and he said that was the "bat pen." They were slated to be fed to the lions. I felt so sorry for them. As I looked closer I was sure I recognized one of the horses.

"The big bay over there, where did he come from?" I asked.

"Oh, he is one of the horses from the Sparks show that they brought in here. He's no good, though, he's an outlaw."

I had heard that Ray Thompson had run into hard times and had sold his stock to the Sparks Circus. I was sure the horse was one of his, and I hoped it was the one I thought it was.

I went to the ring stock boss and asked if I might ride that horse. He didn't care one way or the other; so I had a groom saddle him up and, sure enough, though he looked like a plug, it was the same old Kentucky Man.

Now, unless you had ridden for Ray Thompson, or some other bit-and-spur man who used the same method, it was a pretty sure guess you would not be able to ride one of his horses.

I didn't ride him very hard the first day, nor did I try to work him. When I came back, I told the groom to put him in a box stall, feed him well, and try to get him brushed and looking like something.

From then on, I took Kentucky Man out on a back road, where no one was about, and gave him a workout every day. After a week or so I was again called to the office and, this time, seated at the desk was Mr. John Ringling. He was heavy set, thick jowled and, for some unknown reason, reminded me of an English bulldog I had once had as a little girl. Right now, Mr. Ringling was not smiling.

"My, my, if it isn't the young lady that falls off of all the horses," he said, recalling the first time we had met.

"Not quite, sir; most of the time I get thrown off."

"Well, now, what is this I hear about you riding a horse taken out of the 'bat pen'? Are you trying to be funny? I know that you want to go back to the John Robinson show, but you are not going."

"Look, Mr. Ringling, I am not being funny and I do need a job. If you will have someone come down to the ring



This Atwell photo of Dorothy on Rover was taken in 1930 and later appeared in the 1932 Ringling-Barnum program. Author's collection.

barn I would like to have him look at something."

A short time later he and Pat Valdo, along with several other men whom I had not yet met, came to the barn.

Kentucky Man, when ridden right, was one of the best high school horses in this country, and he worked his heart out for me. Beside the regular routine, he did the swinging piaffer, rock the forehand, and a beautiful high trot. In fact, he did about everything. They were well pleased.

"One more thing, now," said Mr. Ringling, "you are going to have to get with one of our trainers and have him find a horse for you on which to do the waltz and rear. I believe Tex Elmlund is the one for you to see."

"Don't worry about that," I answered--my confidence restored, "as soon as Kentucky Man gets his strength back, he will do that also." (The first pictures I had taken on the Ringling show were with him.)

Now that I had a horse of my own and time on my hands, I again started to wander about the winter quarters. In those days the show was so big and they carried so much stock they had trainers for all of the different types of horses.

Doc Webber was in charge of the jumping horses. After watching him and his girl riders practice them for a few days, I asked him if I might ride one of them. He said that I would have to get permission from the office.

CHAPTER 6 RINGLING-BARNUM ZEBRAS

It never occurred to me that they would not say to go right ahead; but, when I asked, they told me they did not want me to get hurt. After all of the jumpers I had ridden, I had an idea that I was pretty good. However, there had not been a jumping horse number on the John Robinson show, so they had no way of knowing.

"We do have something else in mind for you, though," said Pat Valdo. "We know that you work liberty horses. You worked one of Rudyhoff's acts."

"I sure did." Me and my big mouth!

"We have decided that you will work the zebra liberty act."

(They wouldn't let me ride jumps because they thought I might get hurt, so they put me in with a bunch of zebras. This just goes to show how little the front office knows about what goes on backstage--or ought I say "backyard.") Since this was somebody's last minute idea, there was very little time to rehearse.

When we got to Madison Square Garden in New York City, I found that the three liberty horse acts were to work in the rings, with a pony act on one stage and the zebra act on the other. The rings and the track were dirt, but the stages were covered with canvas.

The liberty horse trainers wore tuxedos and the lady handlers dressed in evening gowns for the pony and zebra acts. This also called for high heeled shoes. The canvas was slippery and it was difficult to keep your footing.

During the rehearsal I had all kinds of problems. When the zebras got to running around the ring they all looked alike to me, so for the opening show I had a bright idea. I bought a calendar with large numbers and, before we went in, I had the horse trainer line them up and I pasted the numbers on their harnesses. That show they worked fine; the next show--utter chaos.

When the act was over, I went down to the basement where the zebras were kept and asked one of the grooms, "Are you sure you had the right harnesses on those zebras?"

He replied, "Listen, lady, we can't tell them apart either."

In case you think I might have been overreacting, it was necessary to put muzzles on them, otherwise they would get into a fight and be at each other's throats. There were times when the grooms did not get the muzzles on the

zebras right and they would come off. Disaster! I often wonder now why they ever kept the act in. It was not worked like a conventional liberty act, instead, you used a bull whip to keep them going, and a gaff to keep them away from you.

For this number I wore a black evening gown with rhinestone straps over the shoulder and a very low bare back and, since in those days we did not have strapless bras, nothing underneath except my panties. There came a day about the middle of the second week when a couple of zebras came into the ring without their muzzles. They got into a big battle and I stepped in to try to break it up. One of them reared up and put his hoof down the front of my dress and ripped it down to my waist. I dropped my whips and ran back to the dressing room, leaving them to settle their differences in whatever fashion they saw fit.

Somehow I managed to work them all that season, but when it came time to sign up again I was ready to say, "No way!"

By that time a great many things had happened, and working an act of that nature was no longer required.

CHAPTER 7 RINGLING-BARNUM JUMPS

While still in winter quarters, as soon as I saw that Kentucky Man had gained strength, I switched him over from astride to sidesaddle so that I could also use him for the waltz and rear. On the Ringling Show the riders all furnished their own wardrobe. Everyone wore whatever struck their fancy. I had very little money, so riding habits were out of the question. Why not evening gowns?

After arriving in New York City and getting settled in a hotel, I went to Macy's to shop. I had heard a lot about this store, but it was bigger and busier than I had ever dreamed a place could be.

Macy's had a bargain basement where you could find most anything at very low prices. I found several evening gowns with real full skirts that would do for riding sidesaddle.

I cannot deny that I was very bitter and resentful. I had so wanted to be friends with the other girls, but I just was not accepted. I made up for it by showing off. In the manege act I tried to steal the act at every show. Of course, this just made matters worse.

We went from New York to the Boston Garden. During the New York engagement, first one and then another of

the jumping horse riders had been injured. By the time we reached Boston there were only three riders left in the number. Let me explain here that in the Garden they have dirt hauled in, pack it down on the cement, and it is quite dangerous when it starts to loosen up and wear through. Now, three riders were not quite enough to make a display.

I was told to report to the office, that one of the bosses, George Smith, wished to see me. It seems that every time I saw him he was chewing on a cigar, but I don't recall ever seeing him light it.

"I understand that a while back you asked to be in the jumping horse number. Would you care to go in now? Just for a few days, that is," he asked.

Certainly, each of the horse trainers was anxious for his presentations to be a success. Tex Elmlund was in charge of all the liberty horse acts; Doc Webber had the jumping horses, but several were involved with the manege and high school horses. Frank Asher was the trainer of the manege horses, and in charge of all their riders. Tex Elmlund was also the boss over the high school horses from the Schumann Circus, which had come over from Europe; and Frank Miller had three high school horses of his own. No one seemed to be in charge of Kentucky Man and me.

After my conversation with George Smith, I went to see Doc Webber, the jumping horse man.

"Mr. Webber, I am here to ride one of your horses." He was in a very ugly mood. "Look, just one more rider going over a hurdle is not going to add much to this number. Now, if I only had someone to ride Rover over the broad jump, that might help. He will take a broad jump over five hurdles, but he usually loses his rider. He is very hard to sit."

"What if I were to ride him sidesaddle? I have quite a grip from riding waltzing and rearing horses."

"Well, we can give it a try."

Everything worked out great; the horse was a wonderful jumper. It was just that the broad jump was so long that it was hard for a rider to grip for that distance but, with riding sidesaddle, it was okay.

I bought a red hunting coat, a black riding skirt, and a black hat. The number was well received, and when the other riders recovered and they again had a full crew, no one suggested that I stop riding in the number.

Now, at last, I was part of a group and had someone to talk to.

There is always competition in the circus business; everyone likes the

sound of applause. Some of the riders would wave their hand in the air as they were going over the jump. I, being strictly horse show where jumping was concerned, rode in a very straight-laced manner. I began to take a lot of ridicule from the other riders about it. So, one day when I had had enough, I said, "What is so great with all of your styling? Why, I could go over a jump with both hands in the air, if I wanted to."

They bet me I could not do it. So, the next show, when it came my turn to finish the act with the broad jump, I threw both hands in the air, dropped the reins, and Rover was on his own. Doc Webber and Pat Valdo were both right behind me as I headed for the dressing room.

"What are you trying to do," yelled Pat, "break your neck?"

"Of course not, I just won a bet. Why, I could ride a horse over a hurdle blindfolded."

"Well, you better not try it," snapped Pat.

So that night I did just that. The audience gasped, and I was so thrilled at the impression I was making that I pulled the blindfold off, vaulted to the ground, and took a bow. The rest is circus history.

CHAPTER 8 RINGLING-BARNUM ON THE ROAD

A great deal had happened in a very short time. I was now getting a special announcement for my reinless blindfold jump. The indoor engagements were over and we were now going on the road.

When I arrived at the circus train, I found that I had been given a section in the single girls' car. Quite a few stories have been written about car 89 and I am sure there could have been a great many more, what with the number of young ladies who, at one time or another, resided there.

We had a woman porter named Helen, she reminded me of Patsy Kelly, only heavier. She was like a mother hen with a few too many chicks. She babied us and spoiled us, but could be as hard as nails when the occasion arose.

There was a certain set of rules which had to be followed. The main one was being in by a set time. If one showed up after the door was locked for the night, she had better have a darn good excuse for being late--and Helen had the only key.

She kept law and order and she did it well. The washroom was at one end of the car with only three wash basins and

three mirrors, and it was up to her to see that all shared them equally.

In the morning she would serve us coffee and rolls or doughnuts in bed, and at night she would have some sort of snack and cold drinks waiting for us. She had only a two burner portable stove, and how she managed it, I have no idea. At the end of each week, on payday, she would give us our bill and, when we paid it, we would also give her a tip.

She listened to all of our troubles and gave us advice, though no one ever seemed to take it. Still, we had someone to turn to. The girls all loved her and we tried to make her job a little easier by making up our own berths and keeping things tidy.

My section was next to that of Helen Kreis, and we became good friends. She later married the famous Carl Wallenda and became top mounter in their high wire act.

When I reached the circus grounds for the first day under canvas I did not know what to expect, but certainly nothing like what I saw. Today's generation could not even picture what it was like; I am glad that I was there and a part of it. There were so many tents you could not help but wonder what they were all for. There were forty-one in all, large and small. The menagerie tent was as large as the average circus tent today. They had their own blacksmith shop and a harness maker. It took three women to care for the wardrobe used in the production numbers and specs. The doctor and nurse had a tent, and some of the acts had private tents. There were dressing room tents

Frank Miller was one of the featured riders on the Ringling show when Dorothy arrived in 1930. Pfening Archives.



for the men and women, a huge side show tent, along with tents for the horses and ponies.

The dining department had three tents, plus the wagons where they did the cooking. They served three full meals a day. The meals were comparable to those served at a leading hotel. They even baked their own pies and cakes. The dining tent was divided into two parts; one side for the working men and the other for the performers. How in the world could they ever manage to move this thing? I found out later on: the show moved in four sections.

The first section carried the cook house and dining room equipment, the draft horse tent, the menagerie, and the sleepers for this part of the crew. As soon as it was loaded on the train and flats, it was on its way to the next town. It was called, aptly enough, "The Flying Squadron."

The second section carried the big top, the props, and also the sideshow on flat cars. There were sleepers for the working men, and horse cars for the draft horses that helped load and unload the train.

The third section was all sleeping cars, and carried the sideshow personnel and some of the staff who needed to be in town early in the morning.

In the fourth section were the performers and all of the performing animals and their keepers. In all, they carried 1,600 people and some 1,000 animals.

I had thought the Garden was big, but here you could hardly see from one end of the tent to the other. I counted seven rings and stages, and there was usually something going on in all seven at the same time. How on earth could I ever manage to do the waltz and rear around this track?

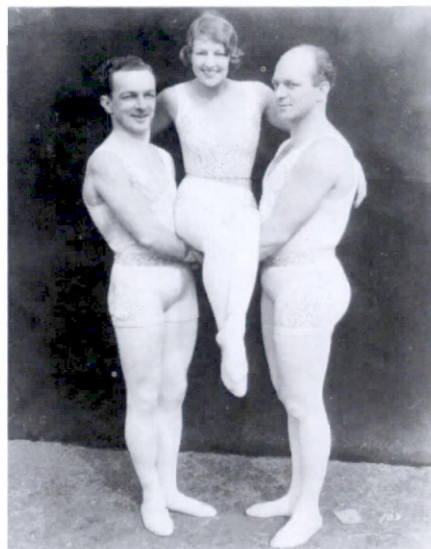
I found the dressing room and my trunks. I was delighted to discover that I had been placed across the aisle from the Reiffenach family, bareback riders and, on one side of me was Marie Maximo, wife of the well known comedy slack wire walker and, on the other side, Vera Bruce of the Alfredo Cadona flying act.

The Reiffenach family members were all wonderful to me. How I would have gotten by without them, I'll never know. Mama Reiffenach took me under her wing and ordered me about, the same as she did her daughters. She taught me how to pack my wardrobe properly and how important it was that everything be put right back in its place as soon as you were finished with it.

One by one I started making friends

with the other riders. It began with them asking questions. When they found that I was more than willing to help them with their horses, by offering suggestions, they accepted me as one of them.

Of all the girls, I liked little Ann Pickle best, and we soon became pals. She was small and very dainty, with a winsome smile, quite clothes conscious, something I was not. I loved pretty wardrobe for my acts but, as far



Vera Bruce, shown here with Alfredo and Lalo Codona, was one of Dorothy's first friends after joining the Ringling-Barnum show. Pfening Archives.

as street clothes were concerned, I was inclined to be careless. Way ahead of my time, I would have been happy to wear blue jeans back and forth to the lot, which, in those days, you would not have dared to do.

Ann saw to it that I bought the proper clothes and she taught me how to shop and get the most for my money. Before long I found that it was important to dress well at all times. It did matter.

About mid-season we arrived in Chicago, Illinois, where we played on the lakefront in Grant Park. It was here that the management sent for Harry Atwell, the action photographer, to take pictures of Rover and me going over the hurdle. Everything was set up outside the tent on a grassy part of the lot. He took quite a few shots, but none of them were any good. The broad jump did not photograph well, and neither did I. I had worn my black and red riding habit. They said I looked like something out of the Gay Nineties; they were right, I did.

One of the show press agents sug-

gested that I borrow a pair of tights and a leotard from one of the girls in the flying act. I asked Vera Bruce to help me out, and she was quick to oblige.

This time we had Rover take a high jump. Of course, for the photos I did not use the blindfold, as they wanted my face to show. Our press agent, feeling that he was on the right track, requested that some more pictures be taken of me on my rearing horse in the same regalia; so we sent for Kentucky Man.

There were three bareback acts with the show. One was Orrin Davenport. He, together with Eddie Stinson, produced the Shrine indoor shows in Detroit and Cleveland, during the winter months. Most of the acts were individually owned, but the big animal presentations were from the American Circus Corporation, now the property of Ringlings. They consisted of the elephants, liberty horses, manege horses, and any other animal acts belonging to them.

When Mr. Stinson came to visit the show to look over the acts, I was one of those he picked to play his dates. He made me an offer, and I accepted. Just before the show closed, Orrin Davenport came around handing out the contracts for the Shrine shows. I called his attention to the fact that his figures and Mr. Stinson's differed, but he said this was what I would receive; I said no more and signed.

Closing day came and I had my ticket to return home, only this time I would not have to sit up all the way there--I had a sleeper. Some of my friends came to the station with me to see me off. Of course, I had been hired for the following season, so it was not "goodbye"--just "so long for now."

CHAPTER 9 SCOTTSBURG, INDIANA

After arriving at Mother's home and resting for a few days, I told her I would take her back to Indiana to visit her aunt again. After I got her settled, I went house hunting. I found what I thought might be to her liking and then showed it to her; it was just what she wanted. I made the down payment on the little farm for her. Not so little at that, thirty-six acres, but farms at that time were usually quite large. We went back to Cincinnati and arranged for a truck to take all of her things to Scottsburg, and then we drove back.

It was primitive: we bought kerosene lamps and a lantern, and an oil burning stove to cook on. There was running water in the house, but you had to

pump a handle to make it do so; this gadget was mounted on the kitchen sink. The toilet was in a separate building and was called an "outhouse." On the circus, the toilets are in separate tents and they are called "donnikers"--I never found out why.

We had fun playing at being farmers; I bought some chickens, a German shepherd puppy and, of all things, a cow. Mother thought it would be great to have all of the butter and cream that we could use. The folks thereabouts were very helpful and a farmer sold me a real gentle cow. When he delivered her he brought along a small calf, hers! I had not bargained for that, but he said it went with her.

Next morning, bright and early, my mother sent me out to get some milk for breakfast. The cow was in the pasture and I had a pail, but she would not stand still long enough for me to set it under her. Then I took a tea cup and followed her around for quite some time, but she would not cooperate. I drove to the farmer's house and he came back to the house with me.

"First, you put some feed in the manger, then you get on the right side to milk her." (I was used to mounting a horse from the left side.) "But, before that," he continued, "you let the calf nurse for a while so she lets her milk down, then you tie the calf up until you finish milking, then let him back with her again. After he is through nursing, you then separate them until time for the next milking. Thought you knew a little something about critters, or I would have told you right off."

It was fine to have all the butter and cream that we could use, but there was so much buttermilk that we did not know what to do with it--so I bought a little pig. He had an idea that he was a dog and became quite a pet. The calf and I got along quite well at first, but as he got bigger and stronger he became quite a handful.

However, about this time I was ready to leave for the indoor shows. I let the land out to a farmer on shares and hired a girl to come by and help Mother a few hours each day. The girl had been raised on a farm and knew just what to do.

CHAPTER 10 INDOOR SHOWS

The first indoor show was the Shrine Circus in Detroit. They laid out the high school horse number the same as it had been presented on the Ringling show. Ella Bradna had her "Act Beautiful"

in the center ring, there were two riders in each end ring, and the rest of us working on the track.

Ella's act consisted of one horse pulling a large cart and another horse standing in the back of it with huge white wings suspended from its back--Pegasus. Ella rode in the front seat with the driver, and six ballet girls, each leading a big white dog, walked on either side. Ella would alight and mount the horse, from whom the wings had



Ella Bradna and her act beautiful, was a center ring attraction on Ringling in 1930. Mrs. Bradna befriended Dorothy. Pfening Archives.

now been removed. She would then go through the manege act in unison with the rest of the riders. At the end of her act, while her horse was lying down, assistants would let loose a flock of pigeons which had been dyed various colors and they would fly to her, landing on an umbrella which she carried and had now opened.

After she left the arena, we would proceed with the specialty horses and I would finish the number with the waltz and rear.

Mr. Stinson and Orrin Davenport called me out of the dressing room after the first show was over.

"Dorothy," said Mr. Stinson, "from now on, during this engagement, you will be in the center ring. Set the routine you will be using, get together with the horse trainer so he can instruct the rest of the riders and also the band leader."

"But, what about Mrs. Bradna?" I asked.

"We will continue to pay her her salary for the rest of the dates, and we are sure she will understand. After all, we have used her act for several years and we need something different."

I wasn't so sure about how she would take it. I felt awful.

Then, too, Fred Bradna was the equestrian director with the Ringling show and I was worried about what his feelings might be. When I told him, he had already been informed.

"That is show business, kid; it happens all the time. Ella held down the center ring with that number for a very long time. We will let her continue to ride her horse in one of the end rings and everything will work out just fine." If Ella was upset she never showed it and later on we were to become the best of friends.

At the end of the week we lined up outside of Mr. Stinson's office to get paid. I was very worried. I had received a phone call from Mother; she was in need of more money than I was going to be able to send her, what with my hotel bill and all.

As I picked up my check, I turned to Mr. Stinson and said, "I sure wish I had signed up with you instead of Mr. Davenport."

As I started out the door, Mr. Stinson called me back. "Let me see that check." He turned to Mr. Davenport, who was seated beside him. "Orrin," he said, "I offered this girl twice the amount of this check and you must admit she is worth it."

Orrin laughed and said, "We try to get them as cheaply as we can."

I was given another check for the original amount agreed upon. To say it was welcome is putting it mildly.

Then, during the second week of the indoor shows, Pat Valdo called me from Florida. "Dorothy, I don't know how to break this to you, but Rover is dead. No one seems to know what happened, they just found him dead in his stall. The trainers here tell me that we have no horse that can replace him. Have you any suggestions?"

CHAPTER 11 SATAN

I recalled that when I had been in winter quarters I had watched the trainer trying to replace a horse in his liberty act. The horse he was working with gave him nothing but trouble. At one point he jumped out of the ring barn window and over the fence before running back to the stables.

The trainer finally gave up on him and had him put back in the pasture. He was a beautiful, long legged black and he held his head high. (I will explain why this is so important later on.) If he was still there, he was the horse I wanted.

Pat called me the next night and said that the horse was still there, but Doc Webber was no longer with the show, and the man who was replacing him as the jumping horse trainer did not think much of the horse. He was disinclined to waste time on a horse which he felt would not work out; let alone maybe having a rider hurt in the process. I had not yet met the new man and, while I understood he was a fine trainer, I had something quite different in mind.

"Mr. Valdo, I do not want the new man to train the horse. I want Tex Elm-lund to break him for me." Tex was in charge of the liberty horses and three school horses and had nothing to do with the jumpers.

"Dorothy, this is unheard of."

"Never mind. Have Tex call me to-night after our show and I will tell him just what I would like for him to do."

When Tex called, I told him that I wanted him to break the horse to come to him when he whistled, using the lash whip and getting a little farther away all the time; then start putting him over the hurdle at liberty.

"Don't let anyone ride him!" I told him.

As soon as the last show was over in Cleveland, I took the train to Sarasota.

Tex was flattered that I wanted him to work on my jumping horse and must have spent a great deal of time on him.

SATAN! I thrilled when I saw him; black as coal was he, and someone had sure been grooming him--he shone. Tex showed me how he had him taking the jump at liberty and, sure enough, he jumped freely and willingly, with his head held high. I had a groom put my saddle on him and he did not like it one bit. He kicked and bucked and reared and snorted but, after a while, he calmed down and we put him over the hurdle. This time when Tex called him to come to him, it was I who gave him his treat first. While his attention was on the food, Tex held his head and my groom gave me a foot up. I quickly wrapped my leg around the horn and put my foot in the stirrup, and none too soon; he really let loose. He bucked and pitched, but did not offer to rear. I called to Tex to help me to get him running. Tex cracked the lash whip and Satan took off. I ran him until he settled down to a nice easy lope and then slowly pulled him to a stop, talking to him all the time.

The bar was on the very lowest pegs the first time I took him over the hurdle. I used the reins as little as I dared, yet still being able to guide him. Tex stood at his accustomed place by the side of the hurdle. I nodded, and when he whistled Satan took off like a shot. He made no attempt, in that open field, to go anywhere but over the jump, and I just held the reins limp in my hands with no cue whatsoever.

I knew then that we had it made. Now it was only a matter of getting him to go higher and higher, and that he did. It did not occur to me at the time but, looking back, I believe that Satan must



This photo of Dorothy riding Satan was taken in the Sarasota quarters in 1931. Author's collection.

have been one of the greatest jumping horses that ever lived. For seven years in a row he jumped over six feet, twice a day. In order to make the jump more sensational, we added fire to the top bar. The hurdle was six feet so, in order to clear it, he had to go a little higher than that.

Unknown to us, the bosses were keeping a close watch on our activities. They sent for me to report to the office and, when I arrived, Charlie Cannely, their head designer, handed me a sketch. The girl in the picture was wearing a leotard of gold; on her head she had a red spangled cap; red shoes on her feet; and from her shoulders were long, flowing chiffon drapes of yellow, orange and red, bespattered with shimmering spangles all over it--depicting flames. Instead of telling him how beautiful I thought it was, I flew into a rage.

"I will not wear such a thing on a

horse," I cried, "why I would as soon go out naked!"

"But, Dorothy," said Charlie, "you did not demur when we had those photos taken of you in Chicago. Why now?"

"That was different. After looking at the first pictures taken in my red jacket and long black skirt, anyone would know that they would not do for publicity. But to ride a jumping horse in a show in such regalia is out of the question. I can just hear people saying, 'Where is the net? She thinks she's in a flying act!'"

Charlie merely shrugged his shoulders. Designing was his job, not arguing with dizzy dames.

We always spent several days in Madison Square Garden in rehearsal. When it came time to lay out the high school number, I found that the show had so liked the way it looked on the indoor shows that they wanted it the same way. That meant I was to have center ring.

As I mentioned before, at that time everyone furnished their own wardrobe, except for the specs and production numbers. The first year after I joined the show, I had a couple of outfits which I had worn on the John Robinson show, and I had bought several evening gowns in Macy's basement in New York. But, if I were to be featured in the center ring, I felt something more flashy was in order.

Con Colleano, the great wire artist, wore the most dazzling costumes of anyone I knew. I went to his wife, and she told me that she would go with me to Con's costumer in New York, but she doubted if they could get an outfit ready in time for the opening.

They did though, and it was beautiful beyond my dreams. A deep pink top covered in rhinestones; a long circular skirt of ostrich feathers ranging from light pink to deepest rose; and a head-dress of variegated feathers to match. It was out of this world--and so was the price! Several week's salary for one costume.

When Tex learned that I was to be in the center ring, he insisted that I ride his horse Ottoman for part of the number. Ottoman was a lovely gray which had come with him when he had been brought over from Europe by Schuman. At one point, the rider was on foot and he or she and the horse danced down the track together: rock-the-forehand on

foot. Tex thought it would be more effective for a lady to dance with the horse. Of course, I continued to use Kentucky Man for the specialties and the waltz and rear.

Opening night went off very well until time for the jumps, which were next to the closing number in the show. My costume for this number had arrived in all its glory and I had had several days to boil over it. Instead of being grateful that the show was furnishing it, I was angry at the thought of wearing it.

The jumping horse number was under the direction of Carlos Caron, with the exception of Satan and me; Tex Elmlund was working with us. This year the show was furnishing the wardrobe for the number. The riders were attired in bright red hunt coats with black lapels; white pants; black riding boots and black caps. They looked nifty. Maybe I was supposed to be the fox!

Now, don't ask me why I did what I did—I have no idea what I had in my mind at the time. Nevertheless, I had gone to Brooks Costumers and rented a long, blonde wig. I bought a flesh colored leotard and I sewed gold leaves on it, at points where I thought they would do the most good. Over this I wore my long black velvet cape, which completely covered me. We had to sit in the back entryway until time for the number and, as it was very cold there, no one thought anything about me being all bundled up.

When the other riders had completed their jumps, my announcement came. The flames were lit, I dropped my cape, and Satan and I dashed out. I heard quite a few gasps from the audience and, immediately after the act, without waiting to take a bow, I ran to my dressing room—at this point I rated a private one. Pat Valdo, Tex Elmlund, and several men whom I did not know, were not far behind me. I had locked the door and now I refused to open it. I was scared!

George Smith, the assistant manager, assured me that I was in no immediate danger, so I opened the door and let everyone see that I did, indeed, have some clothes on. They then told me that, with the lights, the long flowing wig, and the speed at which we had been going, it looked as if Lady Godiva had returned.

I think the only thing that saved me that time was the fact that the newspapers made a big "to-do" about it, and the show welcomed the free publicity.

Anyway, Satan's debut didn't go unnoticed. I was to recall this event at a later date when I was, again, in such a situation.

Needless to say, I returned the rented wig the next day and was happy to wear the outfit they had ordered for me. Incidentally, the costume turned out to be very appropriate for the fire jump.

Many things were to happen to me that season. When I had joined the



E. J. Kelty took this photo of Dorothy on a Ringling-Barnum lot in the early 1930s. Pfening Archives.

show the previous season, I had been assigned a section; now I was to have a stateroom. I was seated not at the star table, but at the staff table in the dining tent. It was suggested that I have a private wagon in which to dress, but I would have none of that. I wished to be in the dressing tent with all of my friends.

At this point, I would like to explain why all of this attention was lavished on me. I was good copy. Most of the performers were imported from different countries and spoke little, if any, English. I liked to entertain the press and would go out of my way to see that they got all of the pictures they wished, not only of myself, but of the other acts as well. It made a good impression when I would invite someone from the press to lunch or dinner and we dined at the same table with the bosses.

This brings to mind a certain incident

that had happened early in the season. The place was New York City; the time, a week after our opening there. It was at a party given for some of the stars on the show and, although I did not figure I had yet attained that status, nevertheless, I had been invited to attend the dinner.

Mr. John Ringling was seated at the head of the table. I was somewhere far down the line. Drinks were being offered before the meal. Mr. Ringling was in poor health at this time and always had a nurse by his side. He turned and said something to her and she arose and came down to where I was seated.

"Miss Herbert, Mr. Ringling wishes to speak with you," she said. I managed to jump to my feet without turning over the table. I sort of side-passed down the aisle, well aware that all eyes were upon me and, for once, I did not welcome the attention.

When I arrived at my destination, Mr. Ringling told me to sit down in the seat that had been vacated by his nurse. He held out his glass and offered me a drink of what I learned a long time later was scotch and soda. I thanked him and said, "Sorry, sir, but I do not drink."

He replied, "No one refuses to drink with John Ringling!" At that, I grabbed the glass and took a good, long drink of the stuff and came up choking.

"Now," continued Mr. Ringling, "you have had your first drink, and what I hope will be your last during the time that you are with my show. It is obvious that you are ambitious, and I will help you to become a star. There are three things from which I shall ask you to abstain: liquor, cigarettes, and men. The first two can ruin your health; the third, your reputation. The last will be the hardest to cope with. You are quite an attractive young lady and there will be propositions, and some may be tempting. Never get the idea that you always have to be nice to someone in order to get ahead; that is the surest way there is to lose everyone's respect, including a man's. Now, eat your dinner."

Mr. Ringling then turned his attention to the others seated around him. It was though I was in a trance. I had been taught how to act at the dinner table, but now I felt as though I ought to be seated in a high chair with a bib around my neck.

The first course was raw oysters on the half shell, which I had never had

the displeasure of coming in contact with before. Not wishing to draw more attention to myself, I devised a method whereby I could get rid of the slimy things without actually chewing them. I accomplished this by filling my mouth with crackers and then swallowing the thing whole. There were six of them in all. I could not tell you, if my life depended on it, what the rest of that dinner consisted of, but the oysters and John Ringling, I never forgot. If he had lived a little longer, I am certain my story would have been quite different.

CHAPTER 12 STUNTS

No one else was doing the reinless jump, to be sure, but riders on other shows were doing the waltz and rear. I wanted my act to be more sensational than anyone else's, so I dreamed up the idea of throwing one leg in the air while my horse was rearing.

"No one else has ever done it," I explained to Tex.

"I don't think you should, either," said Tex. Nonetheless, he agreed to help me.

Now, I am not going to say that it was easy--no one has ever done it since. Other than the ride of Mazeppa, it was the hardest trick I ever learned to do, and I took more spills trying it than anything I ever attempted.

The first thing you have to do is learn to lift one leg from the saddle horn at the same time the horse is going into the rear, and bring your leg back down as he also comes down. Again, the most important thing is timing, otherwise you will go on over and land on the ground, as I did quite a few times before I got the hang of it. Balance plays a big part in all of this type of riding. Later on I was able to do a full-body layback and throw my leg in the air.

When taking the high jump sidesaddle, I was able to lean forward in the saddle so that the horse felt little of my weight. This was true of the regular jumps. In the ride of Mazeppa, with my body dragging over the side of the horse, he was carrying all dead weight.

CHAPTER 13 DANNY DEE

It was now my third season with the Ringling Brothers circus. The show had hired a new announcer, Danny Dee. He was formerly of the *Did You Know?* radio show, which dealt with little known facts. He was popular, and the circus public relations staff felt that he would

be a big asset, not only announcing, but especially handling the radio publicity.

For some reason, he singled me out, perhaps because so few of the performers spoke English; nevertheless, he asked me to appear with him on his radio broadcasts. I liked the challenge of something new, even though it meant getting up earlier in the morning.

Danny worked out a radio program where he would ask me the questions, rather than the studio announcer, and this put me at ease. We had made quite a few broadcasts by the time we reached Boston, and the same old questions and answers had become boring.

No one had ever told me that I was not adapted to writing, so I decided to write a play. Danny was used to innovations, so he did not veto the idea. For my subject I chose the love affair of Fred and Ella Bradna. Ella had told me all about how she had met her husband, Fred. I liked the story, so this was to be my first radio drama.

It seems that this lovely, young bareback rider was performing in a circus in France. Every night a certain handsome cavalry officer would occupy the same box, and every day she would receive a bouquet from him, but he never got up the nerve to sign his name, nor would she have known who he was, if he had. One night, as she was standing on the back of her horse, he stumbled and fell and she was thrown over the railing and into the seats. The handsome cavalry officer picked her up in his arms and went with her to the hospital. This was how she and Fred met.

After she recovered from her fall and went back to work, Fred continued to see her and to wine and dine her every night after the show. They fell madly in love.

Ella and her partner in the bareback act were booked to go to America to join the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Before they left, Fred and Ella were married. In order to be with her, Fred gave up his commission and, as soon as he obtained his release, sailed to America to join her.

When the directors of the Barnum & Bailey Circus discovered that he spoke seven different languages, they offered him the job of interpreter, which he accepted. Since so many of the acts were importations, his was an important position. Before long he was made equestrian director. At the time, on a show that large, that job did not include the announcing. He blew the whistle for the acts to start and stop, and saw to it that they all finished at the same time.

But, back to the love story of Fred and Ella Bradna. I put the story into a radio script; very dramatic. In the story, when she comes to in the hospital after the accident, Fred is right there by her side.

Now for the players: Danny took the part of Fred, and I played Ella; the catcher from one of the flying acts, who had studied drama, was the doctor; our prima donna, who had a lovely speaking voice, took the part of the nurse. We rehearsed for several days between shows.

We were playing in the Boston Garden when we first aired our little drama. It was cold and snowing hard and we were laughing and joking as we climbed into the warm taxi. Even with the windshield wipers going full blast, it was possible to see only a short distance ahead. We were not far from the radio station when our cab was hit by a huge truck. I was seated next to Danny and he must have seen the truck coming, for he pushed me to the floor of the cab just as we collided.

I was not hurt, but we were all rushed to the hospital. While the others were getting patched up, and knowing that a great many of the show people were intending to tune into our program and that the radio station which was allowing us this time would be anxious when we did not show up, I went to a phone, called the station and told them what had happened and that we would not be able to make it. The man I talked to was very concerned and he told me that if it were possible for us to make it at a later hour, they would hold for us and

This is the other design of a lithograph featuring Dorothy Herbert in 1933. Note that the title is shortened to "Ringling-Barnum Circus." Pfening Archives.





Dorothy Herbert with her jumping horse on Ringling in the early 1930s. Pfening Archives.

put us on anytime we could make it. Of course, they broadcast over the air that we had been in an accident but would endeavor to get there as soon as possible.

Recalling this incident now, I can better understand the concern of our bosses. There was their prima donna, their announcer, the catcher from the Concello flying act, and a kookie blonde (me) who was featured in three numbers.

When we arrived at the radio station (thank goodness it was not TV) both men had their heads bandaged and blood all over their shirts. When it came time for the big love scene, Danny looked so silly, I had all I could do to keep from laughing. The play went well and the radio staff was kindness itself.

Fred Bradna's real name was Frederick Ferber, he changed it to Bradna after coming to the States. He looked every inch the officer; the height of dignity with a tiny, well groomed black mustache. Danny looked like one of the East Side Kids who had been in a street fight.

When we got back to the Garden, we were met not only by our bosses, but newsmen and some lawyers as well. The lawyers were from the truck company's insurance agency. Word had sure gotten around fast about the accident. The newspapers latched onto it and there was quite a bit of publicity. The powers that be in the front office were well pleased with the play and we used it in other towns; but never again to this kind of reception.

Danny asked me to write more plays using stories about other performers on the show. Some were good and others were bad, but the directors of the radio stations liked the idea. It was different from the regular interviews.

Before the season had ended, Danny received an offer from his old boss in New York and, while he had enjoyed his experience with the circus, he felt it was too good a job to turn down. I had liked working with him--when he left, I figured that was the end of my radio career. However, when the show opened the next season, I discovered that not only was I expected to continue with the radio show, but I was to go it alone. From that time on, whichever show I was with, this was considered part of my job. Later on, when TV advertising became the rage, this was also included.

CHAPTER 14 OUR CLUB

We had a lot of free time between shows and some of us would spend it playing bridge. Just before the night show, one of us would go out and bring back coffee. In the morning, if there was a bakery anywhere close to the radio station, I would pick up a cake or some cookies so we could have a snack before dressing for the last performance. There was a stand in the backyard where one could buy coffee, milk, or cold drinks.

The third year on the road, after we were back under canvas, some of us girls formed a club. Our dues paid our expenses for the refreshments.

The circus lots were almost always a long way from the town. The railroad cars were usually much closer, so the performers would go directly there from the train.

It was difficult for people, unless they made a special trip by taxi, to pick up any small thing that they might need. I got into the habit of making out a list of the things the club members wanted and, if it were possible, I would pick up the items for them after the broadcast. Since this service was for club members, I hit upon an idea: why not have the members run a little store? We would sell the items for a few cents over our cost and put the extra money in the kitty. We got together and made out a list of the things we most often ran out of: soap, towels, Kleenex, and the like. Since we would have to carry all of this stuff in our personal trunks, we agreed that each member would stock and sell different

items. Soon we added cigarettes, candy bars, and gum. The rest of the girls in the dressing room were quite enthused over the idea of our little store and asked us to include a personal shopping service, with a fee of five or ten cents. Danny Dee may have thought this entailed a lot of extra running around town in the morning, but he never said anything and cheerfully helped me carry the packages. This might sound like a lot of extra work, but actually it was fun.

Our club made money and, near the end of the season, about a week before we were to close, we would rent a dining room in the leading hotel in the town in which we would be playing, and arrange a banquet for all of the members. Each girl could bring either her husband or a friend as her guest. A local band would be hired and, after dinner, there would be dancing.

Several times during the season we also had little parties in the big top, between shows. On the Fourth of July, we would invite everyone on the show to attend, and we would put on some sort of entertainment and serve refreshments.

The first year we were the Pirates Club. In all of the following years we called ourselves the Manege Club.

CHAPTER 15 JOHNNY

For quite a few years the jumping horse act was the next to closing number in the show; the closing act was Hugo Zacchini's cannon. The other girls who rode jumping horses could partly undress and get away from the lot quickly, but with the type of wardrobe I was wearing, it was another thing. I had to strip completely and then dress in my street clothes. Later, the show had a personnel bus to take us to the train, but at that time it was a mad scramble to get to a taxi. We tried to share the cabs, but as soon as they were full, the driver being anxious to get back for another load of passengers often left, leaving me behind. By the time they got back to pick me up, I would sometimes be the only one there.

Upon arriving at the railroad yards, quite often you would find that you had a long walk down the tracks to the coaches. One dark night, while walking alone, I was accosted and my purse taken. I was not harmed, but my bosses thought that I ought to have some protection. Pat Valdo assigned Johnny Grady, who worked with Pat's wife, Laura, in a boomerang act and also clowned in the show, to be my guardi-

an. He could not have made a better choice. Johnny became my shadow, always there.

I fell in love with him and, I think, he with me. However, this was not to be. Johnny, who was honesty itself, told me from the first that he was married to a girl in Boston. He asked me not to mention this to anyone and I never did. He never said why, and I never asked.

Johnny was big, broad shouldered, and proud of the fact that he was Irish. Instead of Dorothy, he always called me Buddy; and buddies we were. Everyone took it for granted that we were going steady and we let them think so. This had many advantages for me, one being that it discouraged others from trying to date me, and I liked that, because I was so tied up in my work I didn't wish for outside involvements. This arrangement continued all of the time that I was with the show.

CHAPTER 16 SCOTTSBURG

It was the end of my third season with the Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus. When the show closed that fall and I went home to Scottsburg, I was very happy to discover that my father was there for a visit. I was hoping that Mother and Dad who, through all the years had had their separations and reunions, could get back together for good.

Dad, who had been raised on a farm, was enthused about our little place and saw all sorts of improvements he could make on it. He also liked the town and the people he had met there. He said that he would enjoy staying there, if only he could find a way to make a living.

Now I must explain that when Mother and I moved to Scottsburg, we never mentioned the fact that I worked on a circus. Mother felt that the townspeople might not accept show folks as their friends. Without anyone ever saying anything, they just assumed that when I went away I was off attending school, and no one told them any different. This led to some odd situations.

This was before the days of television, of course, and people resorted to all sorts of recreation for amusement. Now that there was a man on the place, we were invited to all of the doings. Socials and square dances were the main source of entertainment. Mother insisted that I attend those functions and I felt the fool when some farm boy would bid on the box lunch my mother had prepared so that he could share it with me.

I recall one day when three boys on horseback came by, leading an extra horse, to take me riding. They did a lot of showing off; riding backward, vaulting, and one of them even standing up on his horse. When I told Dad about it, he laughed and said, "Wonder how they would feel if they knew what *you* really do?"

A few days before Christmas, a messenger came with a notice that I had a package at the railway station; we had no phone out there in the country. I drove into town to see what it might be. In a crate, with a big bow tied on it, was the most beautiful pony I had ever seen. A little bay stallion, with a black mane and tail. One of the circus



Dorothy Herbert in her Indian costume while the Ringling show was in Chicago in 1933. Pfening Archives.

fans had sent him to me as a gift. I named him Barney and spent a lot of time teaching him tricks. He was smart and easy to teach, and became a terrific hind leg pony.

Dad found a restaurant in town that was up for sale, and he thought that he could make a success of it if he could get the backing to keep it going until it proved itself, but he was unable to swing it. I offered to go in with him if he would stay, although I wondered how long I would be able to keep it up since I still had to make the payments on the farm. Anyway, we pooled our money and Dad took over the restaurant. I helped him with it until it was time for me to leave for the indoor shows, or rather I ought to say, to the Peru, Indiana, winter quarters to practice for the indoor shows.

The Ringling show had booked the Shrine Circus, as usual, but they were not sending any stock from Florida; instead they were using animals from the shows which they now owned in Peru.

When I arrived at the ring barn, I was

greeted like a long lost daughter. The Al G. Barnes show and the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus each had a waltzing and rearing black stallion. The trainers from both shows pointed out the merits of their horses. I rode them, and they were both good, but I could not make up my mind which I liked best. They ended up by sending both of them to the indoor dates. Later they realized their mistake.

When Pat Valdo and Sam Gumpertz, who was now the manager of the Ringling Show, came to visit, they liked them both so well that they had them shipped to the Sarasota winter quarters after the engagement. Their names were Sir Christopher and Lindy.

CHAPTER 17 THE VAULTAGE ACT

I had asked the officials on the show several times if it might be possible to raise my salary, but, no luck. Perhaps if I were to come up with another act? I had heard about this act from people who had seen it in Europe. I went to Mr. Gumpertz and told him about it. He was quite enthused with the idea, as he had also seen the act while abroad. He said he thought it would be a fine feature for the Wild West concert. I gathered up all of the information I could as to how it had been presented, and Tex and I set about to get it broke.

Now, for the benefit of you young riders that, perchance, may wish to copy this number, I will go into it in detail.

You enter the ring, Roman standing on two horses; they circle the ring and another horse gallops in, going the opposite direction as it comes toward you. The team on which you are standing separates and the third horse goes through. It repeats this maneuver twice, then turns and comes up between the two on which you are standing; once around, and all three come to the center of the ring, and rear. (Let me say, at this point, that the hardest part of this act for me was standing on the three horses while they were rearing.) The extra horse then leaves the ring, and the two upon which you are standing, jump over a hurdle of fire. There are two of these hurdles, one on either side of the ring. The horses jump them three times and you leap off to the ground. These two are then led from the ring.

The third horse now returns, this time wearing a *circingle*. You do a few cross and side vaults, circle the neck, place your foot in a loop, and do a drag over the side of the horse, ending the act with May Wirth's finishing trick--the vaulting rollover and somersault. My

training in trick riding stood me in good stead here.

Tex Elmlund and I worked hard at breaking this number. We used three of the horses from the gray liberty horse act. The harness department made bright red trappings with brass studs for the team.

I had one of the Indians who worked in the concert make me a very elaborate headdress. I ordered an Indian dress from a costumer to go with it. Both Tex and I were to receive extra money for the act.

In the Garden, they do not hold an "after show." Certain parts of the concert are included midway in the show. The first three days went great; the act was fast and the public liked it and we got a warm reception, but the show was running too long. On the fourth day they cut the time allotted to the concert. We had come to the part of my act where I was jumping the two horses, Roman-standing, over the hurdles of fire. It had not occurred to them that this might distract my team, (they were merely trying to save time) nevertheless, they sent in the trick riders on the hippodrome track. In they dashed with much whooping and hollering. One of my horses jumped the hurdle, the other stopped, and I lit astride the hurdle.

They carried me to a nearby hospital. I was pretty badly burned, and when I returned to the show the number was scrapped, and also my dreams of a raise.

As it so happened, all of that hard work was not for naught, after all. I later recreated the act on a different show and was well rewarded for my efforts.

CHAPTER 18 THE TOMMY ATKINS MILITARY DRILL

The Ringling Brothers Circus was always looking for something new. While in winter quarters, Tex and I broke Sir Christopher and Lindy to work high school tandem. Certainly they were both trained to do high school, but it was quite a job to ride one horse and work another on the long lines at the same time.

This was the year of the Tommy Atkins Military Drill. The high school number had been the same for several years, now it was to have an all new look. For the first time the show was going to furnish the wardrobe for this number. All of the girls worked on the track in unison. A smart salute would be our way of styling. They wore red coats, blue pants with a yellow stripe, red and blue hats, and black boots. My outfit for the center ring was white and



This lithograph was designed for the Tommy Atkins military drill in 1934. Pfening Archives.

gold, with the trappings on the horses matching my wardrobe. Very striking.

As usual, something was bound to go wrong for me in Madison Square Garden. The costumes had arrived for the act, and the wardrobe ladies were busy fitting the girls into them; mine was missing. After several phone calls, it arrived, and when I opened the box I found a pleated skirt, but no pants. Anyone who has ever been inclined to wonder what the Scotsmen wear under their kilts ought to ask me.

The skirt did have a bush brush dangling down the front, but this in no way took the place of pants. Fact of the matter, the darn thing kept bouncing up and down on my lap with every movement of the horse, making it impossible to concentrate on what I was trying to do. One of the wardrobe ladies hastily made a pair of underpants for me and I, just as quickly, discarded the brush.

After the first part of the routine, Sir Christopher would be taken from the ring, and I would complete the act riding Lindy. At the climax of this number, after the specialty horses were through, we would all side pass, first down the back track and then down the front. When we got to the back door, my horse and I, which were last, would then dash around the hippodrome track doing the waltz and rear and lay back, which now included the one leg in the air.

The first matinee, everything went fine. Then, at the night show, someone got the bright idea that the waltz and rear would look better with the house lights off and just the spotlights on us. Of course, both the horse and I were blinded. When we got to the far end of the track, Lindy took a step backwards while he was rearing. One foot went inside the ring curb, he lost his balance, tripped, and fell over backwards. I hit my head and was stunned for a moment

or two; then I stumbled over to the ring curb, sat down on it and started to bawl. I thought for sure that Lindy had broken his neck. Everyone rushed over and got the horse back on his feet, and me back on him. The houselights were back on by now and we finished to a big hand. This usually happens when you take a bad spill, but who needs it?

Satan, as usual, was great; our club was a success, and it was a pleasant season--over much too soon. When the show closed and I got home that fall, I found that my father had left and that Mother had sold both the restaurant and the farm. I had been sending money home each week, but was too involved in my own affairs to know what was happening. Mother had bought a lot in town, if you care to call two acres a "lot." It was a beautiful piece of property. She had contacted her brother, who was a builder in Cincinnati, and he had put up a two story house, with a full basement, on the property. The money from the sale of the farm and the restaurant had paid to get it started--now all I had to do was keep up the payments; plus new furniture bought on credit. I was frantic.

Red Wagons and White Canvas: A Story of the Mollie Bailey Circus

By Marj Gurasich

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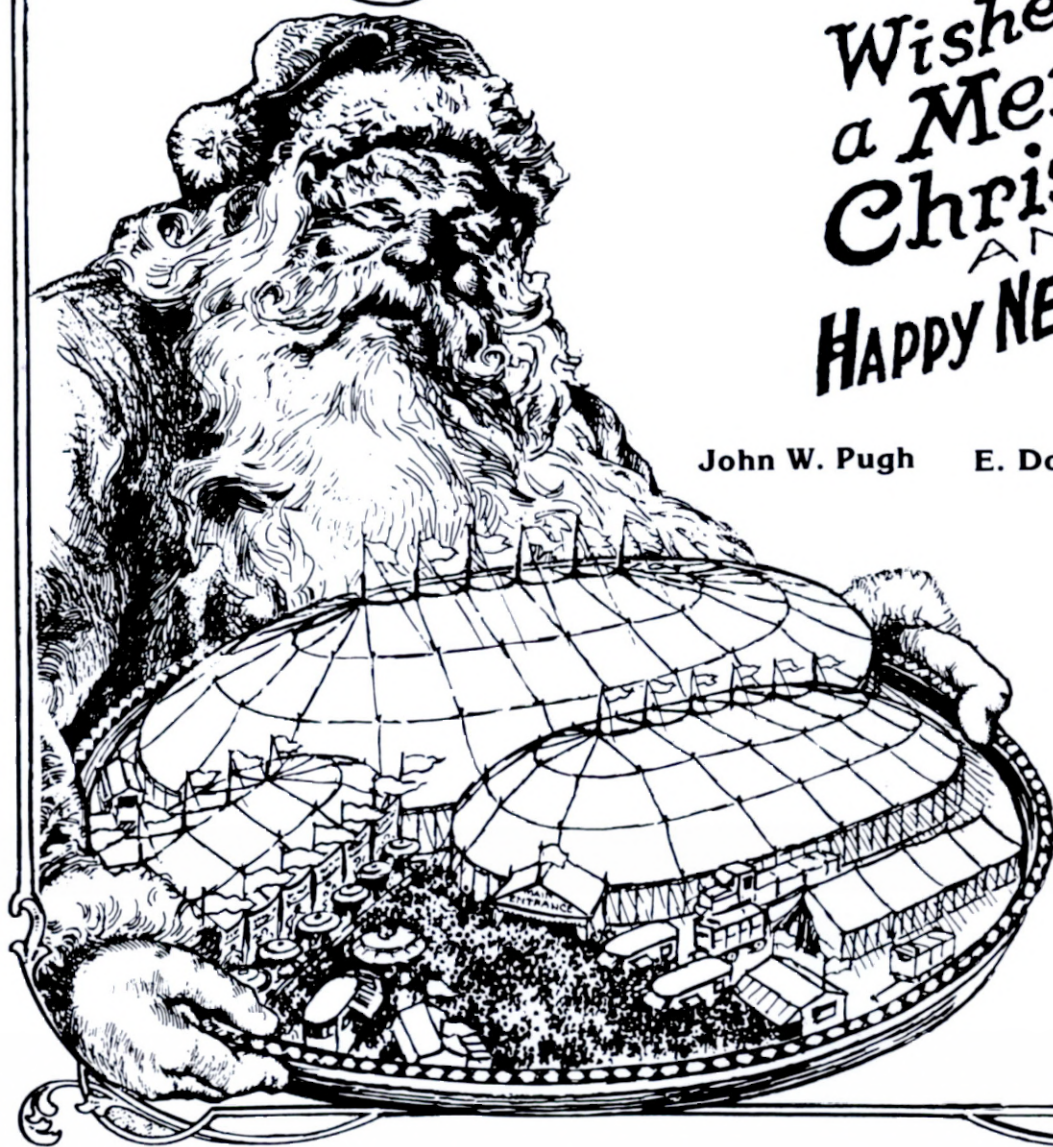
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John Robinson CIRCUS

SEASON OF 1922

By Joseph T. Bradbury

January 1, 1922 found the four Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard circuses housed in four separate quarters. John Robinson was in Peru, Indiana; Hagenbeck-Wallace in West Baden, Indiana; Sells-Floto in Denver, Colorado; and Howes Great London-Van Amburg in Montgomery, Alabama. The trio had earlier decided to send the same shows on the road for the coming season but shortly after the first of the year it was announced that one of them would have a new title.

A report in the *Billboard* said that the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard Circus combination (the trade publications still referred to them in this manner although tradition has long held that they had organized the American Circus Corporation before the end of 1921) had acquired the Gollmar Bros. title and that it would be used on the fourth show quartered in Montgomery, Alabama. Fred C. Gollmar would be general agent and traffic manager. A five year lease of the Gollmar title was obtained from the Gollmar family of Baraboo, Wisconsin. It was an old and established title but had not been used since the 1917 Gollmar Bros.-James Patterson Circus. Shortly thereafter Mugivan leased the Howe-Van Amburgh title to Mike Golden and associates for use on the 1921 Palmer Bros. Circus which they had recently purchased. Golden also made a deal to purchase all of the billing paper, tickets, and other printed forms with the Howe-Van Amburgh title from the Riverside Printing Co.

As was true the previous winter very little concerning the John Robinson Circus in quarters appeared in the *Billboard*, however the publication printed important news from other of the Mugivan shows. The February 11 issue announced that the Sells-Floto Circus had purchased 21 all steel railroad cars from the Keith Railway Equipment Co. of Chicago, Illinois. Fourteen of the cars were flats and two were stocks. They were to be finished in white enamel, the Sells-Floto colors. All of the cars were 70 feet in length with 80,000 pounds capacity each, and were of the

fish-belly type of construction with solid oak floors. The cars were to be delivered April 1. Hagenbeck-Wallace had acquired new all steel type flats from Mt. Vernon the previous year; however, the newly titled Gollmar Bros. show and John Robinson would continue moving on the same equipment as in 1921. John Robinson was

two weeks at the Detroit Shrine Circus; the 74th Regiment Circus, Buffalo, New York; and the Cincinnati Shrine Circus. The Nelsons were scheduled to open with Sells-Floto in the Chicago Coliseum, April 8, and afterwards would join John Robinson for the regular canvas season.

In early March the opening dates for



This beautiful letterhead was first used by the John Robinson Circus during the 1922 season. Pfening Archives.

the last of the Mugivan owned shows to get the new style flat cars, these not coming until the 1928 season.

In late February the *Billboard* noted that the U. S. Tent & Awning Co. of Chicago was furnishing new canvas for a large number of circuses for the coming season. The list included John Robinson, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and Sells-Floto but no details of the type of tents involved were given.

A nice write-up concerning the Nelson Family, star performers in the John Robinson program, came in the March 11, 1922 *Billboard*. The family had been busy during the winter playing indoor circus engagements, including the Nazir Grotto Circus in Canton, Ohio,

the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard shows were all set. Sells-Floto would be first, beginning with the indoor date at the Chicago Coliseum on April 8. Gollmar Bros. would open in Montgomery, Alabama April 17 and Hagenbeck-Wallace in Louisville, Kentucky, April 22. John Robinson would be the last to hit the road starting its season at Peru, Indiana on April 26.

When the March 18, 1922 *Billboard* came out with the annual Circus Roster section it was learned officially that Jerry Mugivan was retiring as an active road manager. He of course would head the general offices in Peru and Chicago but Sam B. Dill would serve as active manager for John Robinson while on tour. Zack Terrell would again manage Sells-Floto; Bert Bowers, Hagenbeck-Wallace; and C. Dan (Danny) Odom, Gollmar Bros.

An interesting article concerning ac-



is never done. This is his fourth season with this show. He is now schooling nearly every day in the big 42 foot ring barn, bareback, trick and high-school horses."

This report was about the only one coming from the Robinson quarters before opening day. There was one short note in early April which stated that Frank McGuyre, who had been with the Mighty Haag Show for many years, would be contracting agent for John Robinson. On his way to join the show in Peru, McGuyre paid the *Billboard* Cincinnati offices a visit where he stated that Haag was having a very good winter season.

The show's official call notice came in the April 8, 1922 *Billboard*. All people engaged for John Robinson Circus were told to report to Peru, Indiana Monday, April 24.

It further stated, "Acknowledge this call by mail or wire to the following.

"Performers, Clowns and Wild West Performers to Fred Ledgett, Equestrian director; Musicians for Big Show Band to Al J. Massey (on Friday, April 21); Candy Butchers to Tom Crum; Side Show performers, colored musicians and comedians, (Sat. April 22 to W. H. McFarland); Lunch car men to Harry Miller; Car Porters to Dock Springer; Polers, night watchmen and trainmen to Howard Ingram; Light men and electricians to Tom Meyers; Tractor drivers and helpers, four, six, eight and ten-horse drivers to Joe Fish; Ring stock men to Chas. E. Donnelly; Blacksmiths, carpenters, and mechanics to Chas. Prentice; Wardrobe People to J. D. Stevens; Seat men, canvasmen and pole riggers to Chas. Young; Cooks, butchers and waiters to George Tipton; Elephant and animal men to Archie Dunlap; Side show canvasmen to Edward Hopkins; Property men to G. H. (Blackie) Williamson; All others, address John Robinson's Circus." A stenographer-bookkeeper, and an experienced time-keeper also were wanted.

Bear cage in the John Robinson Circus parade in Richmond, Indiana in 1922. Pfening Archives.

tivities at the Peru quarters also appeared in the same issue. It was headed, "JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS, Peru (Ind.) Quarters a Scene of Activity." The story said that the circus headquarters of the John Robinson Circus was a scene of activity in preparation for the 1922 season with Jerry Mugivan looking after all the details.

The piece noted that the *Indianapolis Sunday Star* of February 26 carried a lengthy story by Vance Prather, together with a layout of cuts, treating the work at the quarters, the training of animals etc. Quoting Prather, "The Mugivan staff is at work now, day and night, getting ready for the coming season. It doesn't seem humanly possible to get everything ready by April 28, but the staff says it will. There one will find Jerry Mugivan, himself, looking the part of the quiet, dignified, Napoleonic man of business. There one will find Sam B. Dill, the general office man, now five years with the John Robinson Circus; J. A. B. Hossack, general auditor of all the Mugivan, Bowers & Ballard shows, and John B. Schiller, Peru auditor, who has been with the

John Robinson Circus advertising car in 1922. The date sheet is confusing as it reads, "New Orleans," Sept. 30-Oct. 1. The show actually played Baton Rouge on September 30. Piercy photo in Bradbury collection.

show for the last sixteen years. There I found the affable and loquacious Garvin-Frank A. Garvin, chief purchasing agent for the circus and right-hand man for Mr. Mugivan--who took me around the quarters.

"The Robinson Circus has more old employees, perhaps, than any one industry in Indiana, and they're just one family. There's Slivers Holland, the assistant boss canvasman in summer. In the winter he works in the carpenter shop on wagons. There's Charles Prentice of Peru, the 'sea-going master mechanic,' who works all the year round in the shops. Then there's Joe Fish, of Baraboo, Wis.--long the winter quarters of other noted circuses--the boss hostler. Joe doctors and feeds the horses, ponies and mules. He has been with the circus for 22 years. There's the boss canvasman, Charles Young of Peru, who has been 36 years with circuses, most of the time with John Robinson.

"Thirty years in the circus business, Fred Ledgett, equestrian director for the John Robinson Circus, says his work





The octagon shaped monkey cage in the Richmond 1922 parade. Pfening Archives.

The ad concluded by stating that the show could use good, useful circus people in all branches; ladies for Wild West, lady race riders, single and double iron jaw artists, and workingmen in all departments.

A week later the show ran a *Billboard* advertisement saying that musicians were wanted. Needed were a few more men on all instruments to complete A. F. of M. band. They had to report on April 21. "Experienced tuba and baritone wire. Others write; Al J. Massey, with Boston, Mass. address until April 18, after that date, Peru, Ind."

According to the Havirland files the show travelled in 1922 on the same number and type of rail cars as in previous years. These included 1 advance, 7 stocks, 14 flats, and 8 coaches for a total of 30. The train color scheme is likewise believed to have been the same as before, basically orange with white lettering.

Baggage wagons continued to have the color scheme of cream with red trim and lettering. The number and type of wagons carried should have been essentially the same as in 1921, including the canvas spool vehicles. The show continued to carry the two Knox tractors.

From available photos it appears the parade lineup was about the same as the previous season. The Gladiator and Lion tableau served as the No. 1 bandwagon. The No. 2 bandwagon had high sky boards and the painting of camels in a desert scene on the sides. Serving as sideshow bandwagon was the same box type vehicle with a painting of Roman Chariot Racing on one side and on the other a lion in a jungle scene being fought by a Tarzan type character. The clown bandwagon was the India or Jardinere tableau. The Gentry twin air calliope was again used but there had been some remodeling of the wagon since 1921. It now had a closed top and skyboard. Bringing up the rear was

the steam calliope used the previous season. Since the history of these tableau wagons appeared in the 1921 article it will not be repeated here.

Among the 1922 cages (about a dozen) were still a number of the rather short, plain vehicles carried the year before. Likewise, the Egyptian statue hippo den which had come from Ringling-Barnum was present as was the cage with three large semi circle den compartments. Missing in one of the compartments, however, was the baby elephant, Virginia, which had been transferred to the Sells-Floto Circus. The little octagon shaped monkey cage was still in the lineup.

There were at least two important new-comers to the John Robinson cages in 1922. These were the cottage type dens associated with the old John Robinson Ten Big Shows outfit. Photos show one was No. 39. Their presence in the John Robinson 1922 menagerie is an interesting story. They had been part of the John Robinson Ten Big Shows equipment which had been purchased from the Robinson family by

Billy Lorette, the clown cop, was the was producing clown on the John Robinson Circus in 1922. Pfening Archives.



Another cage in the Robinson parade in Richmond in 1922. Pfening Archives.

Mugivan and Bowers back in 1916. The new owners had kept the show's title but soon sold the physical equipment to Ben Wallace who had it shipped from Terrace Park, Ohio to his quarters in Peru, Indiana. Wallace sold some of this equipment, rented out other pieces, while the rest was stored in Peru. When Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard purchased the old quarters, railroad repair shops, and real estate from the Wallace estate the remaining original John Robinson Ten Big equipment was included in the deal. Hence these two cages became the property of Mugivan and his associates and went out in 1922 on John Robinson. Actually, there may have been other cages involved but we have photos only of these two. Beginning in 1923 Sells-Floto would also have some of the old Robinson cottage type cages.

The 1922 elephant herd numbered 8, one less than carried in 1921, however there were some changes in the individual animals. Big Tillie was transferred to Sells-Floto as was the baby, Virginia. A newcomer was the elephant, known to historians as Wallace Jennie, which according to Bill Woodcock was imported from Italy. The Woodcock files indicate the following eight elephants went on John Robinson in 1922: Major, Betty, Dutch, Blanche, Ruth, Margaret, Mama, and Wallace Jennie.

There was a massive array of circuses going out in 1922. Heading the group were 14 flat car type railroad shows which was slightly more than the previous year. This number was a peak which would never again in circus history be reached. These railers, according to the Havirland files, included Ringling-Barnum, about 95-100 cars; Sells-Floto 30 cars (later enlarged to 40); Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30 cars; John Robinson, 30 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars; Gollmar Bros., 25 cars; Walter L. Main, 15 cars; Rhoda Royal, 15 cars; Sparks, 15 cars; Howes Great London

and Van Amburgh's Trained Wild Animals, 15 cars; Gentry Bros., 15 cars; Patterson's Trained Wild Animal, 20 cars; Campbell-Bailey-Hutchingson, 10 cars; and Christy Bros., 10 cars, the later having just graduated from the gilly show classification.

Gilly or tunnel railroad shows included Cole Bros, Cooper Bros., and M. L. Clark & Sons (King brothers), and possibly others.

Overland shows included Mighty Haag, Hunt's, Homest Bill & Lucky Bill, La Mont Bros., Lindemann Bros., Atterbury Bros., Lowery Bros., Rippel Bros., James B. O'Neil, Great Keystone (Sam Dock), Harry Le Roy, C. L. Alderfers, and Rose Killian.

All of the flat car type circuses paraded with the exception of Ringling-Barnum. Some of the larger overland shows also put on the daily march.

Spring 1922 arrived and it was time for the circus season to begin. The industrial depression which had gripped many areas of the nation had ceased. Things were fairly quiet in Washington, D. C. where President Warren G. Harding occupied the White House. The major scandals which would mar his administration had not as yet broken out. Reconstruction in Europe was still going on. Although temporarily quiet on the surface, political matters in many countries would soon be boiling. Later in 1922 Mussolini would lead his Fascist march on Rome and rise to power in Italy and in 1923 Hitler would make his first move. The major trouble brewing on the home front was labor unrest. Before the year was out the country would witness the violent coal mine strike at Herrin, Illinois in which 36 would be killed. Strikes centered in the mining and railroad industries would cause the most trouble for circuses on tour in 1922. Even though an actual strike of a railroad did not take place the constant threat of one caused many a gray hair for circus owners and agents during the season. A severe shortage of rail equipment also developed.

The May 6, 1922 *Billboard* covered John Robinson's season opener with an article headlined, "MANY IMPROVEMENTS IN JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS. 1922 Season Officially Opened in Cincinnati Following Brief Preliminary Tour--Fine Performance--Equipment First-Class." The review of the show read as follows:

"The John Robinson Circus, now in its ninety-ninth year, started its 1922 season



The Nelson Sisters, Oneida, Rosina and Hilda, presented a low wire act in the 1922 Robinson performance. This is a 1920 photo. Pfening Archives.

at Peru, Ind. (winter quarters of the show), April 26, and after showing Marion, Ind. on the 27th; Richmond, Ind. on the 28th, and Hamilton, O., on the 29th, came into Cincinnati for a two-day engagement, showing at the Cumminsville lot May 1, and in Norwood on the 2nd. Peru gave the show a big send off and a big part of the town watched the trains leave last Wednesday night for Marion. Thursday, at Marion, co-operating with the Lions Club, saw one of the biggest crowds ever in that city. Thru arrangements made with the Lions' Club, 'Kiddies Day,' combined with a big civic movement and parade, brought thousands to the city for the event. At the afternoon performance three thousand kiddies were the guests of the Lions Club at the circus. The evening business was exceptionally good. In Richmond on Friday to good

Arthur Nelson and his family posed for this 1922 photo on the John Robinson Circus. Pfening Archives.



business. Here Billy Sunday is holding services and he spoke a good word for the circus and many friends he had in the circus business. Business in Hamilton was good.

"With a Sunday rest in Cincinnati everything was 'set' for the official opening of the season in the Queen City. The performance, under the able direction of Equestrian Director Fred Ledgett, ran in mid-season form. The parade given in Cincinnati on Monday morning was witnessed by hundreds of people and drew much commendation. Business at the matinee in Cumminsville was very good, with favorable weather prevailing.

"The Robinson show this season is far better than last year. Quite a number of feature acts are carried and that they found favor with the big audience on Monday was attested by abundance of applause. Manager Jerry Mugivan with his assistants, Sam Dill and George Moyer, see that every detail is carried out, both in the movement of the show and the performance.

"The train, tents, seats and stock are in first-class shape and make a fine appearance. The canvas is all new, the big top being a dandy, and shows up wonderfully at night when illuminated. Two big electric lighting plants are carried by the management. Credit should also go to the management for the splendid cook house carried this season. George Tipton is in charge and his equipment is first-class.

"The outstanding numbers in the performance are: The Famous Nelson Family in one of the greatest acrobatic risley acts ever presented; this act has been reviewed so many times by *Billboard* representatives that further laudatory comment is unnecessary; the Nine Flying Wards, who probably have no superiors when it comes to a flying return act; Hassan troupe of Arabian tumblers (nine in number), one of the finest of its kind; Joe Hodgini and company, in a comedy bare-back riding act that has improved greatly since last year. The Bedinis, in very good equestrian numbers, and Irene Montgomery. Other good numbers are offered and are mentioned in the program below.

"A half hour before the big show program began Musician Director Al G. Massey and his excellent corps of musicians render a high-class musical program and receive a big hand. Just before the Grand Tournament Percy Smith sang



The clown bandwagon, India or Jardiniere tableau, in the 1922 John Robinson Circus Richmond parade. Pfening Archives.

with the band and was given an ovation. The numbers, running in order, follow:

"No. 1 - Madame Bedini in a Liberty act; Victor with his comedy pony, dog and monkey act, and Joe Lewis with his comedy mule.

"No. 2 - Elephant acts, worked by Irene Montgomery and Madame Lorette, the former presenting 'Major,' a bull that walks on its hind legs. Miss Montgomery handles the number in an excellent manner.

"No. 3 - Van Jerome and Bray Bernard, LaTrebe Bros., Bert Weston and the LaMott Trio, in hand balancing feats; Four Wards (ladies) in hand balancing feats; Bennett Sisters and the Williams in Roman ring numbers. The Wards are featured and accomplish difficult stunts.

"No. 4 - Reno McCree and Joe Hodgini in principal riding acts, working gracefully and skillfully.

"No. 5 - A big flying ladder number in which the following participate: Rosina Nelson, Hilda Nelson, Theol Nelson, Cicil Reger, Miss Young, Ruby Chapin, Irene Montgomery, Madame Lorette, Rose Russell, Oneida Nelson, Lulu Gibson, Dessie Bennett, Minnie Rooney, Miss Williams and the Misses Ward, cloud swings.

"No. 6 - Madame Bedini, Fredrica O'Brien and Miss Bobby Gossans, in beautiful statue numbers.

"No. 7 - Three LeRoy Sisters, Misses Lorette and Reger and the Hodgini Sisters, in a remarkable exhibition of iron jaw work.

"No. 8 - The Nelson Family (nine in number). A great act.

"No. 9 - First-class trapeze number, participated in by Lorette and Reger, the Ettys, Harry LaReno, Emmett Kelly, the Youngs, James Walters, Bennett Sisters and the Williams.

"No. 10 - The Hassans, Arab tumblers and pyramid builders. Their offerings

on the Hippodrome track were a sensation.

"No. 11 - Wire acts of a high order by Tetu Harriman, Minnie Rooney, Three Nelson Sisters and four Kimball sisters.

"No. 12 - Reno McCree and company and Joe Hodgini and company, in comedy bareback riding acts, amused greatly.

"No. 13 - Zela, juggling and contortion act; Irene Bennett, on the revolving globe; Tetu Harriman, also on the globe; Walters, Lareno and Choy Ko, juggling and contortion, and the Five Canton Chinese, juggling and Oriental feats.

"No. 14 - The Youngs, the Bernards and the Arleys, in daring high-perch acts.

"No. 15 - Manege numbers by Victor and Madame Bedini in the rings, and on the track by Nettie Dill, John Smith, Slivers, with Maud, mule; Joe Bowers, Miss Greer, Tetu Harriman, Oneida Nelson, Irene Montgomery, Ruby Chapin, Theol Nelson, Hilda Nelson; high jumping horses by Joseph Greer and company.

"No. 16 - Bernie Griggs, Wm Ashton and company, Fred Nelson and company and Joe Greer, in comedy mule numbers.

"No. 17 - The Nine Wards in a sensational flying act. Deserved all the applause given them.

"No. 18 - Hippodrome races which proved interesting.

"Clown alley was well represented and the 'joeys' caused many a laugh thruout the big show performance. Billy Lorette, the clown 'cop,' is one of the best in his particular line. Doc Keene is principal clown and put on some good numbers. The other funny fellows include Floyd Short, Billy Ashton, Mr. and Mrs. Fred DeMarrs, Bones Hartzell, Slivers Johnson, Edward Comius, Fred Coyle, Max Thorman, George Allen, Kayo Kech, Fred Nelson, Percy Smith, Fred O'Brien, Bobby Gossans, Kelly, Dorno, and Zelda. Doc Keene is director of the clown band of twelve pieces.

"Al J. Massey's musicians include



This cottage den No. 39 was originally on the John Robinson Ten Big Shows and appeared in the 1922 Richmond parade. Pfening Archives.

Victor Robbins, Harry Stahler, Thos. Gordon, Edward Lemes, J. H. Lyons, Syd Grubbs, Ernest Wright, Jos. Hodgdon, Chas. Reamer, Jim Carroll, R. F. Hoyt, Carl Weber, Gilmer Cobbel, Ghos Grady, Fred Hanson, Billy Allison, Wm. Hudson, Ray Roberts, Geo Craven, Maurice Esson, Oscar Djerf, O. H. Saxton, Otto Grabs, Fred Mullis, Ed Coates and Fred Licht.

"The Wild West lineup: Joe Greer, Carlos Carreon, Tom Hitt, Bill Malton, Ed Miller, Mack Harmon Jr; Etta Carreon and Emma Hitt. Frank Ellis, wrestler meets all comers.

"Executive Staff: John Robinson Shows Company, prop.; Jerry Mugivan, manager; Sam Dill and George Moyer, assistant managers; [Author's note: Although at times Mugivan was still listed as manager, Sam Dill was the official road manager.]; Arthur Hopper, general agent; Frank McGuyre, local contractor; J. E. Corey and Tom Murray, twenty-four hour men; Robert E. Hickey, general press representative; Ralph Ravenscroft, press agent with the show; Pat Burke, auditor; John A. Schiller, treasurer; J. W. Sullivan, bookkeeper; F. A. Gavin, secretary; Wm. H. Moore, officer; W. H. McFarland, sideshow manager; Fred Ledgett, equestrian director; Al J. Massey, musical director; Walter Garland, supt. of feed; Chas. Young, boss canvasman, assisted by Jean (Frenchy) Healey, George Buff Terry and Doc Waddell; Chas. Prentice, master mechanic, assisted by Walter Scott and J. C. Howe; Howard Ingram, trainmaster; Joe Fish, boss hostler; Harry Bert, announcer; J. S. Stevens, wardrobe; Thos. B. Myers, supt. of lights, assisted by Ed Riebe; Doc Springer, head porter; J. A. Bertha, timekeeper; Archie Dunlap, supt. of menagerie; John P. Bauer, asst., and fifteen men; Harry Bert, in charge of ticket department, the roster including

James McCammon (who is also mail agent), George King, Jack Bennett, Lee Bennett, Jerome Harriman, Frank Loving, Phil Davis, Jim Cotton, Chester Monahan, and Walter Garland. Thos. Crum has charge of the privileges.

"Visitors at the show in Hamilton were Chas. Z. Mikesell, formerly general agent of the Boer War Spectacle and the Great Mundy Shows, who now holds an office in the Court House of that city, and J. Milt Traber, former circus executive.

"A ball was held in Peru for the circus folk on Monday night, April 24, and more than 600 couples were present."

A separate piece in the same issue had the roster for the John Robinson side show. It was as follows: W. J. McFarland, manager, assisted by Arthur J. Ryan; Kelley Mitchell, Frank Loving, Guy Smuck, Jimmie Cotton and W. J. Miller, ticket sellers; Joe Bailey and Joe Bell, ticket takers. Attractions were Jesse Adams, boy giant; Dolly, the doll midget; John Carter, man with the iron skull; Hilda Miller, snakes; Carlos Gonzales, knife thrower; Fred Palmer, comedy juggler; Jos. Dieckman, fire eater; Prof. George Nelson, tattooed man; Mlle. Kessell, bag puncher; Le-Roy Benton and wife, musical act; Capt. Trumble, untameable lion act; Madame DeHaven, mind reader; Grace McGearry and her "Sun-Maid Glides," Kitty Christ, Fay Mitchell, Trixy Loving, Doris Cotton and Babe Ryan. John Davis and his Turkish orchestra; Neal McClarin's black band and minstrels (sixteen people), featuring Arthur Wollege, "The Oriental Rags." Al Eisenburg was in charge of the Pit Show.

The John Robinson 1922 printed program contains a section with a series of remarkable drawings which give a complete picture of the interior of the big top and indicates the position where each act was located during the program. The drawings, top notch blueprint quality, show there were 14 sections of reserve seats on the long side and on the short side there were six sections on either side of the bandstand. Reserves were 14 high, and blues on both ends of the tent were 18 high. Even the number and position of the poles were pictured. There were four center poles, 20 in the first row of quarters, 28 in the second, and 80 side poles. The big top was obviously a 150 ft. round with three 50's, the same size as had been used in previous seasons.

The performance was given in a center stage and a ring on either side of it, a regular three ring format. Fourteen swinging ladders were indicated and the position of each performer in the big

top was given. Likewise, the position on the hippodrome track with the name of each rider in the equine numbers was shown. One act not listed in the *Billboard* review but mentioned in the program in the route book was that of Strassel and Seals which worked in Display No. 2, the same number in which the elephants performed. In this act Madame Lovett was listed as working 4 elephants in one ring and Irene Montgomery 5 in the other. This number of nine conflicts with the 8 listed in the Woodcock files.

A short time after the season's opener the *Billboard* ran a piece stating that the No. 1 advertising car of the John Robinson Circus, equipped with electric lights, shower baths, hot and cold



Yasu Mary Agnes Kabayashe was a Japanese girl who was raised by Dan-ny Robinson, and appeared as Tetu Robinson until marrying Jerome Harriman in 1920. She went with the Robinson Famous Circus when Mugivan and Bowers purchased it. She was later adopted by Jerry Mugivan. Tetu Harriman presented a low wire act on the Robinson show in 1922. Pfening Archives.

running water, and the newest and most popular invention, the radio, was covering the country with a superb line of new and gorgeous posters. The roster of the car included William M. Roddy, manager; Allen Lester Jones, secretary; Bob Hickey, press agent; Grover Hill, boss billposter; A. V. Fuller, boss lithographer and steward; John Ryne, bannerman; Roy Burroughs, pastemaker; Lacey Hullinger, chef; and H. Richardson, programmer. Also the names of 13 billposters and 3 lithographers were given.

Moving out of the Cincinnati area the show continued in Ohio playing Middletown, Dayton, Columbus, and Dover. Then the route carried it into

Pennsylvania for Washington, McKeesport, Somerset, Uniontown, Connells-ville, and Charleroi which completed the third week of the season.

The May 20, 1922 *Billboard* covered the Robinson route as follows:

"May 3, in Middletown, O., the John Robinson Circus played to good business and was the host to the 'newsies' of the local daily papers. May 4 in Dayton to fine business, afternoon and evening. After the night performance many of the folks were guests of A. J. Pick, old circus man with 'Orphans of the Storm' at a local theater.

"May 5 in Columbus to excellent business, especially in the evening. The Shrine Circus, held here five or six weeks ago, did not affect the business. Many of the people with the show had played the Shrine Circus, and many of the Shriners visited the big top and dressing rooms to see them.

"May 6 at Dover the trains arrived at 11 a. m. and by 12 o'clock the show was on the lot and up. This was a demonstration of what the organization could do and they went after it admirably. Business here was good despite threatening rains. However, the rain held off until after the night show and just as it was over it poured down in torrents. No difficulty was experienced in getting away and bright and early the show arrived in Washington, Pa., Sunday morning, May 7.

"The Washington lot is one that has been practically impossible to set up on in former years, due to low, soft ground. Hagenbeck-Wallace, Robinson and others have been unable to land for several years. Last year this show only set up the cookhouse and horse tents and had to 'call it off' leaving town at 3 p. m. in a heavy rain. But this year, with a good sunny day and a strong wind blowing, it dried up in great shape."

The season of 1922 produced some of the closest competition in history between the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard units and Ringling-Barnum. Most of the fighting took place between Sells-Floto and the Big Show although Hagenbeck-Wallace also was involved in a number of scraps. John Robinson and Gollmar Bros. were less involved than the other two. The May 27, 1922 *Billboard* gave a good example of the competition between these shows in a piece headlined, "R-B and Sells-Floto Opposition Continues. Shows Will be From Two Days to Two Weeks Apart for Next Few Weeks." The story noted that while there had been no day and date engagements opposition between Ringling-Barnum and Sells-Floto continued.

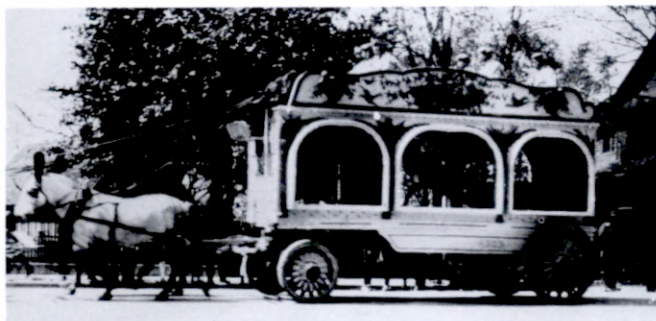
Sells-Floto preceded the Ringling show in Philadelphia by one week, and the same was the case in Washington, D. C., Baltimore, and Newark, New Jersey. That week they were just two days apart, at two stands, Sells-Floto appearing in Allentown, Pennsylvania, May 22 and Ringling, the 24th; Sells-Floto at Scranton, Pennsylvania May 23 and Ringling, the 25. Sells-Floto would be at Utica, New York May 25 with Ringling going there May 9. On May 27 Sells-Floto would be in Pittsfield, Massachusetts with Ringling there June 10. Sells-Floto would be in Boston Decoration Day week May 29-June 3, while Ringling would be there week of June

cars consisted of three coaches, two stocks, four flats and another advertising car. These along with 28 head of baggage horses, six cages, two tableau wagons, two stringer wagons, one stable wagon, one rigging wagon and six elephants would be shipped from Peru that week by special movement to Boston where they would be added to the show when it was to appear there.

It is interesting that the additional equipment going to Sells-Floto came from John Robinson surplus in Peru rather than Sells-Floto equipment from Denver. Ordinarily this would be something to raise the interest of wagon historians as to what vehicles were in-

hart and Fort Wayne. It was back into Michigan for a single date at Jackson which was followed by a return to Ohio for Sandusky and Painesville. All Ohio dates were played during the eighth week, Warren, Uhrichsville, Massillon, Galion, Findlay, and Sidney.

There was a long dry spell in the *Billboard* with little or nothing concerning the John Robinson route. Finally a short note appeared in the June 17, 1922 issue which said that for the fourth time that season Advertising Car No. 1 of the John Robinson Circus passed through Canton, Ohio on route to Uhrichsville, Ohio where the show played June 13. This was the third time



This huge semi-circle three den cage is shown in the 1922 Richmond Robinson parade. Pfening Archives.

12. Sells-Floto would play Manchester, New Hampshire June 9 and Ringling June 24; also Sells-Floto would be in Portland, Maine, June 12 with Ringling following June 26, and finally Sells-Floto would play Worcester, Massachusetts June 15 with Ringling appearing there June 23.

The article concluded by saying that when Ringling-Barnum was to enter Canada about June 30 for approximately ten stands it was understood that Hagenbeck-Wallace would be right ahead of it in some places.

There was a major billing war going on in Cleveland, Ohio where Hagenbeck-Wallace was to play May 19-20 and Ringling-Barnum scheduled for June 2-3. Observers said the shows were staging a record billposting war. Both advance squads were said to have done a good job with Hagenbeck-Wallace so far putting up more paper but another Ringling bill car was due in shortly to help out.

Even though Sells-Floto was heavily engaged against Ringling-Barnum it appears the show was getting its share of the take. The May 27, 1922 *Billboard* said that ten additional cars were being shipped to Sells-Floto at its stand in Boston which would enlarge it to 40. The article noted that the ten additional

involved, especially the two tableau wagons and six cages. Unfortunately, an inadequate number of Sells-Floto photos taken before and after the enlargement made it impossible to give with certainty a description of these vehicles. A strong possibility exists that some of the cages could have been former John Robinson Ten Big Shows cottage type dens, although at present they have not been pictured in any photos taken on Sells-Floto prior to 1923. In any event the enlargement of Sells-Floto in 1922 from 30 cars to 40 would be repeated again some seven seasons later when the same thing happened at the same stand. The 1929 enlargement was due to the great drawing power of Tom Mix.

During the fourth week of the season John Robinson continued in the Keystone state playing dates at Pittsburgh (two days, May 15-16), and single stand at Kittanning, Butler, Meadville, and Erie. Two Pennsylvania stands also came in the fifth week, Sharon and Beaver Falls, then it was back into Ohio for Alliance, Ashtabula, Lorain, and Toledo.

The show opened the sixth week of the season with two days in Detroit, May 29-30, and moving across the state played Port Huron, Flint, Lansing, and Grand Rapids.

Heading southward into Indiana the first stand of the seventh week was in South Bend which was followed by Elk-



The side show bandwagon had a painting of Roman chariot riders on one side and a painting of a man fighting a lion on the other side. Pfening Archives.

for the Canton district to be invaded by the Robinson show. On May 6 the show was in Dover, Ohio; on May 24 at Alliance, Ohio and next Wednesday, June 14, it would make the Massillon, Ohio stand, eight miles west of Canton. Improvement in industrial conditions in Eastern Ohio were said to be responsible for altering the route of the Robinson show. It had backtracked more times that summer than in any previous recent year. An advertisement appeared in the same issue which read "Musicians Wanted For John Robinson Circus. Experienced men on all instruments. Have immediate openings for strong cornets and flute and piccolo." Those interested were asked to contact bandmaster Al J. Massey as per route.

A week later the *Billboard* commented on the show's stand at Massillon, stating that traveling 100 miles from Uhrichsville to that city, which was less than 60 miles cross country, the matinee was light but the night performance was witnessed by a well-filled house. The weather was ideal. Equestrian Director Fred Ledgett had the show moving in mid-season form, and there had been very few changes in the personnel since the opening in Peru. Irene Mont-

gomery, versatile artiste, still held center stage, her elephant act and aerial ladder being among the hits of the show. The *Billboard* representative from Canton caught the show there and spent a pleasant evening in clown alley, being entertained by Billy Lorette and Doc Keene. This was the third time that season that the show had "hop-scotched" back into Ohio and after a few days stay in the Buckeye State returned to Michigan for the third time. Business continued good.

Moving out of Ohio on a Sunday run the show headed into Indiana for a stand at Indianapolis, Monday, June 19, as the ninth week began. Two more Hoosier dates were played, Lafayette, and Huntington, then it was back into Michigan at Benton Harbor which was followed by Muskegon and Owosso. All of the tenth week found John Robinson in the state with stands coming at Owosso, Pontiac, Bay City, East Tawas, Alpena, and Cheboygan. According to the route book the show was in Owosso June 24 and also on Monday June 26. Possibly, there was some kind of special date set up like this, but more probably the June 24 date was a misprint.

As the season went into the eleventh week the show was still in Michigan for two dates, Ishpeming and Escanaba, then moved into Wisconsin to play-Green Bay, Monotowoc, and Kenosha and was at Aurora, Illinois on July 8, the final date of the week.

The July 15 *Billboard* had fine coverage of some of the Michigan stands and stated that "James Oliver Curwood, originator and writer of scores of Northern tales that have had immense vogue in filmland, visited the John Robinson Circus at Owosso on June 26, seeking material for another yarn, and he found it, and incidentally, he witnessed the best circus performance he ever saw. He said so himself. A tale of seven sisters, based in the Nelson family, will be his next book. Business capacity at both houses.

"The elements in Pontiac, June 27, were kind. Shortly after the parade returned to the lot a real summer thunderstorm broke. Very wet. It cleared in thirty minutes and the afternoon house was capacity. Rain again poured lustily from 5 to 6 p.m., but cleared for the night performance, resulting in an excellent day's business.

"Bay City, June 28, was circus hungry. An ideal day with tremendous crowds at both afternoon and evening performances. Jim Rutherford, who made Bay City a low license town, was ever in sight. It

has been four years since any circus showed Bay City and the turnout was evidence of the people's desire.

"East Tawas, June 29. Well, the swimming was great. So was the dance after the show. Tawas Bay rose two inches, so many indulged in the aquatic sports. There was lots of sand and a few resorters-and that's East Tawas.

"Alpena, June 30, another circus-hungry town. Results, good business.

"Cheboygan, July 1, fair only, and that toward the minus. But a stream ran along side the lot. There were boats. There were fish to be caught and pictorially the day was a huge success.

"Ishpeming, Mich., July 3 - It was cold, but just enough snap so that the folks turned out in full force for both afternoon and night performances, overcoated, however. Escanaba, July 4 - both houses were packed. George Tip-ton overlooked nothing about the dinner. Done in red, white, and blue the interior of the dining room presented a beautiful and timely appearance that was fully in keeping with the menu.

"Green Bay, Wis., July 5 - Con. T. Kennedy and wife were at the night performance. The clowns cut some capers for Con that wreathed his face in smiles. And the business--very good. Then to Manitowoc, July 6. Rain, but only slight, and not enough to affect the business, which was exceptionally good. July 7 at Kenosha a parade was missed. Business was all that could be handled. Aurora, Ill., July 8 - turned out to be the banner spot of the week."

The article concluded by advising a ladies baseball team had been playing between shows daily. Unbeaten, they are about to issue challenges to any and all comers, and they didn't bar the size

The cover of the 1922 John Robinson Circus program. The acts were listed on a drawing of the big top that appeared for each display. Pfening Archives.



of the ball used--indoor baseball or regulation. The show in addition to having two separate ladies baseball teams that season, the Red Birds and the Blue Birds, also had a men's team. All players came from the roster of performers and games were scheduled with local teams along the route.

An additional *Billboard* note said that the lot which John Robinson used in Aurora on July 8 was the old carnival lot on North Lake street opposite the cemetery. While the lot was rough and rolling it was large enough to hold the show. Street car facilities were good. The local *Billboard* representative understood the lot was available for circus use. A six pole big top could be erected. The haul was not so far as the old driving park, and it was easier access to the business section.

During the twelfth week John Robinson played three stands in Illinois, Kensington, Bloomington, and Peoria, then went into Iowa for Iowa City, Waterloo, Des Moines, and Atlantic.

The July 29 *Billboard* covered the show's activities at Bloomington, Illinois on July 10. The article said the arrival of John Robinson train in Bloomington was late, the first wagon going on the lot at 9:30. At 12 o'clock, as the parade was about to leave for downtown, it started to rain, and for half hour it looked like it would be all off for the balance of the day. The parade got away about 1 o'clock and due to some tall hustling the show started at 2:30 without the customary concert. The afternoon crowd were the losers as E. W. Ritchey, the article's author, heard the program in the evening stating that a great deal of credit was due Al J. Massey for the very fine organization that he had assembled. The music throughout the performance was a feature.

The Flying Wards took the applause honors at both shows, Bloomington being their home city. They were not given a thing, however, that they did not deserve, as they had no superiors in their particular line of endeavor. The whole troupe was kept busy all day renewing acquaintances and handshaking their many friends. Other outstanding numbers which seemed to please the audience were the Nelson Family, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Bedini, Irene Montgomery, McCree and Hodgini, riding acts; Billy Lorette and the clown band. The afternoon show had a three-quarter house, while the night show played to capacity.

The article concluded by noting the feature of the sideshow was Neil



The John Robinson air calliope, formerly a Gentry twin steamer in the 1922 Richmond parade. The wagon had been remodeled with the addition of a skyboard and roof during the previous winter. Pfening Archives.

McLaren's "Alabama Minstrels," featuring "The Original Rags", extemporaneous singer. This fellow was away above the average attraction found in circus sideshows and deserved special mention.

A few weeks later the *Billboard* ran a fine two page photo showing the John Robinson sideshow personnel lined up in front of the bannerline but unfortunately it is not of good enough quality to reproduce here. What is most impressive is the sideshow band with 12 pieces.

At Council Bluffs, Iowa, July 17, the parade was given in a downpour which lasted until a short time before the matinee. Business was very satisfactory at both performances. Many comments were heard on the program which contained high class circus acts and was entertaining from start to finish and also on the appearance of the performers and other employees. James Morse, press representative with the Patterson Wild Animal Show and other members of that show, were visitors at the afternoon performance and all spoke in high terms of the John Robinson performance.

A story coming from the Chicago office of the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard interests on July 15 said that the firm was making the most sweeping plans to put on indoor circuses during the coming winter. A representative of the company pointed to the fact that they had upwards of three million invested in circus property. They believed that a great many fraternal groups had been imposed upon by promoters who had no definite alignment with the circus business. With their vast equipment the Mugivan group felt that they could meet every possible need for winter amusement on any scale, however large.

They emphasized that they owned

seven circus titles, all nationally known. Any organization wishing to put on a winter circus could take its pick of these titles and be assured that so far as acts, animal exhibitions or anything else connected with a circus were concerned, they would get it quick and get it all. Many of the artists, musicians, bosses, property men, animal trainers and other attaches were anxious to work the year round. Mugivan pointed out they could supply one elephant for a program or, if that is not enough, they could supply up to sixty-five. They could supply one Royal Bengal tiger or they could put 25 of his brothers and sisters on a bill. The same went for aerial acts and ring acts of any size. It was evident that even though some of this was typical exaggeration, Mugivan and his associates planned to get into the winter circus field in a major way.

John Robinson was in Iowa at the start of the thirteenth week playing dates at Council Bluffs and Shenandoah, then it moved into Missouri for Maryville, and then on to Nebraska to play Fall City and Beatrice, and finally to Kansas where it was in Manhattan on July 22 to close out the week which had seen the show in a total of four states.

Three more Kansas dates came in the fourteenth week, Wichita, Arkansas City, and Independence, then the route moved southward into Oklahoma with stands scheduled at Tulsa, Bartlesville, and Cushing. There were nothing but Okie dates during the fifteenth week: Oklahoma City, Enid, Chickasha, Shawnee, McAlester, and Muskogee.

As the sixteenth week began the show was back in Kansas at Chanute, August 7, then played Iola and Ottawa before moving eastward into Missouri for Carrollton, Kerkville, and Hannibal.

While the show was in the great mid-western bread-basket the trade publications were virtually silent on John Robinson happenings. The silence was finally broken in an article in the August 26 *Billboard* headed "JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS. Cooler Weather,



This former John Robinson Ten Big Shows cottage den was used in 1922. The show had at least two cages of this type that season. Melvin photo in Bradbury collection.

Good Business and Many Visitors During Sixteenth Week of Season." The story said that the sixteenth week of the season was one of moderate temperature, a welcome relief from the territory in Oklahoma that kept the mercury hovering between 107 and 111. On August 6 at Chanute, Kansas a few hours after a late arrival, a severe storm cracked the heat spell, and it had been cool and liveable all the week. Intermittent rains fell August 7, but far enough apart to allow a parade and to permit farmers to come to town, resulting in a capacity house in the afternoon and a fair night crowd.

Iola and Ottawa, Kansas August 8 and 9, were big. Circus hungry, the natives packed each of the four performances. At Ottawa Mrs. Raymond Elder, of the Sells-Floto and Patterson circuses, visited her many friends in the dressing room. She had fully recovered from her recent accident and expected to soon join her husband on the Ringling-Barnum show. Charles Mugivan also spent a day with the folks at Ottawa.

At Carrollton, Missouri August 10, there were many visitors, among them Mrs. Mary Meyers, wife of Frank Meyers, treasurer, who was back to stay, having fully recovered from a recent illness.

On August 11, at Kerkville, Missouri, William P. Hall motored over from Lancaster with his family to visit the afternoon performance. Despite an all-day drizzle, the afternoon attendance at Kerkville was capacity and business at night was good.

Railroad trouble caused a 12:30 p. m. arrival at Hannibal, August 12, resulting in loss of parade. However, both performances were greeted by filled attendance, particularly in the afternoon. John Talbot of Denver, who formerly was one of the owners of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, visited at Hannibal, as did Walter Nealand of the Con

T. Kennedy Shows, to the delight of his many friends. Nealand was once press representative for John Robinson.

It was mid-August and the show was still in Missouri indicating that the usual route for this time of year would not be followed. The show would move back into the northern Kentucky-Indiana area as was customary but the usual tour of West Virginia and Virginia would not be made. The coal fields which had been heavily hit by strikes would be avoided and evidently the show also decided to pass up other areas of the Virginias. A few instances of difficulty with rail moves were mentioned but so far the show had suffered no real inconvenience, although it was noted the train had to go some 100 miles between stands that were only 60 miles apart. Possibly certain railroads had to be avoided on account of strike conditions which made for the longer jump.

The show was back in Illinois to start the seventeenth week with a stand at Champaign, August 14, but the tour of the state was a short one as the route immediately took it on to Indiana at Crawfordsville the next day. John Robinson then remained in the Hoosier State for the rest of the week playing Kokomo, Bluffton, New Castle and Greensburg. A Sunday run next moved the show to Louisville, to start the eighteenth week but it was back to Indiana the next day for Columbus. Two additional dates in the state were played at Lebanon and Greencastle, then the trains moved over into Illinois for stands at Paris and Litchfield to conclude the week.

As the nineteenth week came on the show began a gradual backtracking into territory played several weeks earlier as it moved into Missouri at Columbia, August 28. Four additional stands in the state came next, Moberly, Boonville, Jefferson City, and Sedalia, and on the last day of the week there was a return to Kansas and a stand at Fort Scott.

The September 2 *Billboard* carried a most interesting article which told about the work going on building the new Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard quarters at Peru, as well as covering the John Robinson route of late. The story said that members of the John Robinson show were joyous over accounts in recently-received papers from Peru that told of work under way there that would transform the show's winter quarters into one of the most modern cold weather circus lodgings. The improvement would be completed by November 20.

Each of the ten structures would be made of concrete and steel and raised to

a height above the water line reached by the spring freshets. There would be three built-in rings where trainers could work far enough apart from the other buildings to give uninterrupted leisure

INCOMPARABLE IN ALL THE WORLD OF AMUSEMENT

JOHN ROBINSON'S CIRCUS

STANDING ALONE IN GREATNESS AND COMPLETENESS

AN INSURANCE POLICY OF PLEASURE

9 FAMOUS NELSON FAMILY - 9 POSITIVELY THE GREATEST ACROBATIC ACT IN THE WORLD.

PRETTIEST BARE BACK RIDERS

5-TOKU JAPANESE TROUPE - 5 BENNETT SISTERS AND FULLY 150 OTHERS

STAY AND SEE THE **WILD WEST**

FOUR FOLD MUSEUM - AVIARY - MENAGERIE

WITHOUT EXEMPLAR, PARALLEL OR PRECEDENT IN THE AMERICAN CIRCUS

FLYING WARD

MISS MAMIE WARD

GREATEST RIDERS IN KNOWN WORLD.

INCLUDING

Miss Irene Montgomery | The Hodgkin's Troupe

Reno McGree | Miss Effie Davenport

Miss Bodini and 45 others equally known to fame.

JOHN ROBINSON'S CIRCUS

WE POSITIVELY GIVE BIG **FREE STREET PARADE** 10:00 A.M. DAILY

4 - COMPLETE CIRCUSES - 4

THE **COMBINED MENAGERIE** MOST STUPENDOUS ON EARTH

Everyone - Both Young And Old Should Not Miss This Most COMPREHENSIVE ANIMAL EXHIBITION EVER ASSEMBLED.

Herald used by the John Robinson Circus during the 1922 season. It was printed by the Erie Litho Co. Pfening Archives.

in the completion of acts. All barns and houses would be heated from a central plant, but city current would be used for lighting. A separate water system would make it unnecessary to depend upon Peru for water. A long steel shed, over four tracks, would provide ample shelter for all of the show's railroad cars. A powerful radio receiving

set also would help make the John Robinson showfolk happy during the winter.

The article continued noting the show had entertained many visitors through Illinois and Indiana. At Champaign, Illinois, Sunday, August 13, the first section did not arrive from Hannibal, Missouri until 4:30 p. m. It was a hot run, but considering the distance and railroad conditions the moving time was good. The two shows on August 14 in Champaign were given to big audiences. At Crawfordsville, Indiana August 15, the Zeigler brothers, Attica bankers witnessed both shows and saw two overflowing audiences.

At Kokomo, Indiana August 16, it seemed as if all of the people from Peru were on hand for the matinee and to visit old friends. It was a great day for hand-shaking, high temperature and excellent business. The night attendance was extra large. Al Martin of the recently closed Patterson Circus ran down from Chicago for the day and Mrs. S. J. Cronin also arrived to spend a few days with her husband "Buster."

Bluffton, Indiana August 17, was hot and despite the fact the local fair was in its last day, attendance was good at both shows.

In Newcastle, Indiana August 18, and Greensburg, Aug. 19, the natives were eager for their first circus of the season.

The piece concluded by stating that Tom Murray, 24 hour man, suffering from stomach trouble, was forced to leave for his home in Syracuse, New York.

Although no official announcement had been made there was another purpose behind all of the construction work and improvements going on at the main Peru quarters and the North Peru Rail shops. It was planned that Sells-Floto would go into quarters at Peru after the season closed instead of returning to Denver. Peru would then be the winter home of two of the Mugivan shows, John Robinson and Sells-Floto. Peru would be a better location for Sells-Floto since it was much nearer to Chicago, scene of the annual indoor date at the Coliseum at the start of each new season. Sells-Floto was no longer considered a "western show" but now played a national route including the larger cities in the east, the midwest and other parts of the nation.

A week later the *Billboard* had excellent coverage of the John Robinson route in a story headlined "18th Week for John Robinson Reported Very Successful." The week, ushered in at Louisville, August 21, had been a very successful one. Louisville attendance was

big at both houses. The balance of the week throughout Indiana and Illinois was good, considering the economic conditions and late arrivals that were the rule with most all railroad shows. R. M. Harvey, Herbert Maddy, and Ed C. Knupp spent Sunday and Monday in Louisville and Mrs. Bud Gorman and Rex de Rosselli of the Al G. Barnes Circus visited the night show.

At Shelbyville, Indiana, August 22, T. E. Goodrich, editor of the *Shelbyville Daily Republican* showed Gardner Wilson, the John Robinson press agent, a valued treasure in the form of a second edition of the *Daily Republican* dated September 8, 1875. The entire back page was given over to the John Robinson Circus advertisement, in the center of which was a likeness of John Robinson. Shelbyville, as 47 years ago, gave two good houses when the circus again played the town.

On August 28 at Lebanon, Indiana the train did not arrive until nearly noon, but with a short haul to the lot both performances got away on time, and to fairly good crowds despite the missing of the parade and a drizzling rain all day.

Litchfield, Illinois, August 26, brought to a close an excellent week with two moderate houses.

The nation's rail service seemed to be deteriorating as the weeks went on. Late August, September, and October appeared to be the worst times for railroad shows. Late arrivals were commonplace, often causing missed parades and delayed matinees. However, this wasn't new to many circuses as they had gone through the same thing just a few years earlier during World War 1. In any event John Robinson as well as the rest of the railers had to make the best of it during the last few weeks of the season.

To begin the twentieth week a Sunday run moved the Robinson train out of Kansas back into Missouri where a

Steam calliope in the 1922 John Robinson Circus parade. Pfening Archives.

stand at Springfield was scheduled for Monday September 4. It was back to Kansas the next day at Pittsburg and then into Oklahoma to play Claremore. Three stands in Arkansas then completed the week, Fort Smith, Russellville, and Pine Bluff. There was one additional stand in Arkansas, at Camden, as the twenty-first week started but then the show moved South into Louisiana to play Shreveport. One final date in Arkansas came next, Texarkana, September 13, then it was on to Texas for Sulphur Springs, Dallas, and Fort Worth as the week ended.

The September 23, *Billboard* provided news coverage for this period. It stated that without a question of doubt the flowers for the week went to Fort Smith, the September 7 stand, that produced John Perry, age unknown, who journeyed some 20 hours to visit the John Robinson Circus and to see again the circus he visited 69 years ago in Ohio. The daily papers devoted columns of space to this.

Labor Day at Springfield, Missouri was an ideal holiday stand, with no opposition and two wonderful houses Mr. and Mrs. Bert Mayo, formerly of the Patterson Circus were guests. The September 5 stand at Pittsburg, Kansas, a distance of 115 miles was made in record time over the Missouri Pacific System. The 20th week of the 1922 season of the John Robinson Circus covered three states with excellent service.

Teaching music in the public schools at Pittsburg was John J. Richards, former bandmaster of the Forepaugh-Sells and Ringling circuses, but as the guest of Al Massey, he laid aside all work and enjoyed the holiday and the old times it recalled.

Claremore, Oklahoma, September 6, and Fort Smith, Arkansas September 7, were both good and only noticeable decrease in business being the night house at Claremore. Russellville, Arkansas, September 8, was advertised as an afternoon show only, and taxed the seating capacity. On an urgent request, however, from the city officials and a promise from the railroad to make the

run of 151 miles in six hours, the management decided to give a night performance, and it was even bigger than the most optimistic expected.

Pine Bluff, Arkansas, September 9, gave two good houses and brought to light a visitor in Dick Jeffries, formerly of the John Robinson Circus but now located at Hot Springs. That day the show received the sad news from Syracuse, New York of the death of Tom Murray, who until his recent illness was 24 hour man with the show.

A week later *Billboard* said that that the show's twenty first week was one of long runs and late arrivals but in spite of the increasing railroad difficulties, business, with one exception, had been very good. At Camden, Arkansas, Sunday, September 10, a severe rain storm caused the loss of considerable wardrobe, but by Monday morning the water on the lot receded so that both performances were given although attendance was light. Shreveport, Louisiana, September 12, gave two excellent houses in spite of the fact that the parade did not return to the lot until 3 p.m. after an eight mile march. The boys of the Ringling-Barnum No. 2 car, together with Will L. Wilkins, press agent, who was in town, were guests at the afternoon performance.

Texarkana, September 3, was marked by a late arrival but a short haul enabled the parade to be given on time. Both houses were fair.

Sulphur Springs, Texas, September 14, gave two good houses but the run into Dallas for the Friday, September 15, stand was so late that it was not until 2 p.m. that the parade reached the center part of town. However, circus-hungry Dallisites waited, and were at the door when the show started at 3:30 p.m. The night attendance taxed the capacity of the big top. Robert Hickey, the John Robinson Circus press agent,

Beautiful eight horse hitch pulling a cage wagon in Robinson parade in Houston, Texas, September 26, 1922. Walker Morris photo in Bradbury collection.



together with Murray Pennock and Bill Hains of the Al G. Barnes Circus were guests at the afternoon show.

Fort Worth, in spite of its closeness to Dallas, was another stand where the train did not arrive until 10 a.m. However, the parade was given and the afternoon show got away on time to an excellent house, and with cool of the evening a tremendous crowd visited the night performance.

In the same issue was another short note which commended on the Robinson stand at Dallas saying that the Nelson Family entertained with their many and varied acts. The Ward Family, the versatile Irene Montgomery and many other acts rounded out an exceptionally good program. The piece also said that the band, under the leadership of Al J. Massey, deserved commendation, and the sideshow under the management of "Pop" McFarland was far above the average. Among his attractions here Major Joe Lessing, Dolly Dixon, midget and Mrs. Lydia Benson. A final item said that John Robinson was the first show to play Dallas that season.

All of the twenty second week was spent in the Lone Star state. Dates were at Mexia, Waco, Bryan, Brenham, Austin, and San Antonio as were four dates during the twenty third week. Stands played included Galveston, Houston, Port Arthur, and Orange, then the show moved over into Louisiana for Crowley and Baton Rouge to complete the week.

As could be expected John Robinson found opposition from other shows in Texas. Al G. Barnes played through the state and at the close of its season rather than risk an uncertain trip to the west coast to winter as usual, on account of a threatened railroad strike wintered in Dallas. Robinson and Barnes had also crossed paths some weeks earlier in Louisville. Robinson played Louisville on August 21 while Al G. Barnes had been in a short time before. Houston, Texas was one of the few stands during the season where John Robinson and Ringling-Barnum clashed. John Robinson booked the stand for September 23 and Ringling-Barnum October 13.

The October 7, *Billboard* informed the circus world about the John Robinson swing through Texas. The article said that fair and warm weather marked the week, with the town of Mexia on

Monday, September 18, the best stand so far in the State. Although Mexia was a small oil-boom city, it registered two turnaway houses. At Waco the next day's business was light. Two baggage horses were lost at Waco by injuries from a street car as they were hauling to the train in the evening.

Bryan and Brenham on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively, were both good, with Al Lillenthal, feed man of Houston, and friend of every contractor and 24 hour man as a guest at the latter town. Austin on Friday, September 23, although excessively warm in the afternoon, was good, but the night fully



The Robinson show used this Strobbridge one sheet flat poster to advertise the hippo, Congo. She was the first hippo owned by Mugivan and Bowers and was on the show from 1917 to 1922. Pfening Archives.

made up for any loss that the heat might have caused in the afternoon. The notice below from the *Austin Morning American* the day after the show was unsolicited and shows how well the capital city enjoyed the John Robinson Circus: "The John Robinson Circus has come and gone and over 10,000 persons attended the two performances. From the parade at noon until the last wagon rolled on the rain late in the night the day was marked by a complete absence of anything that might reflect on the credit of the John Robinson Circus and its personnel. There was welcome relief from any and all short-change artists and other nondescript gentry of chance that as a rule follow the white tops. As for the big show itself, there is the same old story of unstinted praise to sing for it. An army could not be handled with greater precision. The courtesy of the management is the charm that appears to the techni-

cian in observing this great aggregation. There is not a resemblance of a hitch. The instant one act nears completion the other is standing at the ring bank ready to rush in and keep up the pace. The eye is never rested and in all quarters there is continually something happening."

The *Billboard* article continued by stating that San Antonio on Saturday resulted in two good houses, despite the fact that the lot location was a good distance from the city. Murray Pennock, general agent of the Al G. Barnes Circus, Mrs. "Doc" Palmer and Mrs. Ben Austin were all guests at the evening performance.

Because of a lack of engines it was not until daylight Sunday, September 24, that the first section of the train left San Antonio, resulting in a 11:30 p.m. arrival in Galveston, but the menagerie, with the aid of the electric light plants that were the first wagons taken to the lot in Galveston, was erected. George Tipton served a 1 a.m. breakfast for those who cared to avail themselves.

The following week the *Billboard* completed coverage of the John Robin-

son Texas trip as well as the stands in Louisiana. The report said that chief among the happenings was the issuing of the last route card, announcing the closing of the season at Centralia, Illinois on October 12. It was not, however, due to business conditions that the John Robinson Circus was experiencing an early closing, but came entirely from the present shortage of equipment on the railroads. In the South and Southwest the conditions daily become more difficult, and after due consideration it was deemed best by the management to bring the 1922 season to an end.

The week opening at Galveston, Texas, September 25, had been one of the best of the season. It was midnight Sunday when the train arrived in Galveston from San Antonio, but the parade went out on time Monday, and both houses were good.

At Houston, September 26, the personnel of the Gentry Bros. Show, wintering in Houston, visited at both performances. Among the many guests were Jake Newman and Ben Austin. The afternoon house was not large, but the evening business fully made up for the deficiency.



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Photo by Donald A. Fairbanks

Port Arthur, Texas, September 29, only an afternoon performance was given, as the run to the Saturday stand, Baton Rouge, was made by ferry after a 149 mile run, and it was necessary that an early start be made. However, the afternoon in Crowley was fair, recent rains having a tendency to lessen the attendance. Mr. La Coma, brother-in-law of M. L. Clark, was a guest at Crowley. He had a tented motion picture show that was doing well in the smaller towns of Texas and Louisiana.

Although the John Robinson Circus was only four days behind the Al G. Barnes Circus in Baton Rouge and that the Ringling-Barnum show was billed for October 14, two packed houses were the result of the engagement, which showed how circus hungry Baton Rouge was. It was unquestionably the best town in the Southwest, having a weekly payroll of over \$100,000. Ed C. Warner of the Sells-Floto Circus paid a hurried visit in Baton Rouge, but left early in the evening.

One of the big stories in 1922 was the beginning of a movement to eliminate all traces of "grift" (or graft as it was sometimes referred to, but both having the same meaning) in circus and carnival operations. The *Billboard* along with a number of prominent showmen headed by Charles Ringling were behind it. Some forms of grift no doubt go back to the earliest days of the circus but it gained real prominence and became widespread in the latter quarter of the last century. Some shows were notorious grifters in the 1880's and 90's. By the early 1920's most of the cruder forms of grift, such as the employment of pickpockets, and stealing from adjoining clothes lines had played out. Charles Ringling was the author of a remarkable article which appeared in the October 7, 1922 *Billboard* titled "Let's Get Together for A Graftless 1923." In the article Ringling wrote:

"I propose the *Billboard* (if the suggestion meets its approval) ask each and every tent showman to subscribe to an agreement not to operate or permit to be operated on his grounds at any time or place.

"1. Games of Chance. 2. Betting devices. 3. Short change transactions. 4. Cooch shows. 5. 'Behind the curtain' dances of shows. 6. Female impersona-

tor playing to or annoying patrons before or during the show. 7. 'For Men Only' shows. 8. Forty-niner or other dance hall joints. 9. Suggestive, obscene stunts or acts of any nature. 10. Privilege car, in which gambling is carried on or in which booze is sold either to employees or others."

The presence or degree of grift varied from show to show. Ringling-Barnum and Sparks Circus led the list of shows that were completely free of grift. The late William H. Woodcock Sr. once told me that when he was on the Campbell-Bailey-Hutchingson Circus in 1921 there was no grift, but it was a different story on the Rhoda Royal Circus the previous year. Here is what Woodcock wrote me about that show:

"When I was on the Rhoda Royal show in 1920 I once saw 5 stores working at one time in the sideshow, nuts, broads, dropcase, pickout, and logs. The kid show featured a wild man blowoff, also an untamable lion, and had a very strong cooch department. On the midway was always plenty of light joints, jingleboards, sheetwriters and the like, plus George Bedonie, positive king of all jam pitchmen at that period. There were always 4 or 5 connection

ing in the *Billboard* and from eyewitnesses some shows appeared to have stronger doses than others among the Mugivan four. In the September 30, 1922 *Billboard* we find this: "A correspondent writes: 'By the way, the Sells-Floto outfit, when they were in St. Louis two months ago, exhibited more grift than any show I have seen in a long time, and with adequate police protection got away with everything but murder. The camel-back in the sideshow collected \$6,000 in three days. Connection workers were plentiful, and butchers were selling 5 cent ice cream cones and soft drinks for the unheard of sum of 20 cents.'"

From reports it seems John Robinson was the cleanest of the Mugivan shows. One note in the same *Billboard* as the Sells-Floto item said this: "C. E. Ward of Pittsburg, Kan., and old troupier, who writes that he stands for fairness as well as cleanliness, says that he attended the afternoon performance of the John Robinson Circus at Pittsburg, September 5, and is in a position to know that the big show, as well as the annex, was free from short-change artists and shell games. Ward enclosed a newspaper clipping, which, in part, says, 'Particularly enjoyable was the freedom of the show grounds from short-change artists, gamblers, sensational sideshows and other undesirable features that worry the cops. The police stationed at the circus grounds reported that so far as the circus was concerned the blotter would remain clean.'"

A late season notice in the *Billboard* had this report concerning grift on a small two car show: "A correspondent writes us from Hattiesburg, Miss. that Rice Bros. two car circus played in that territory for three or four weeks and altho it did not make Hattiesburg, it passed thru there twice. Said correspondent further says, 'Many reports reach here that they had grift aplenty and a real cooch dance. Three-card monte [usually called broads by showmen of the time] seemed to be the main grift, so the sheriff from Perry County told me.'"

The presence of grift on one of the Mugivan shows, Gollmar Bros., was the cause of a real tragedy in late October when W. H. (Billy) Miles, popular and well liked legal adjuster of the show, was shot and killed at Earle, Ar-



This Strobridge Lithograph Co. produced a number of posters for Mugivan and Bowers in the early 1920s. This design of the Nine Flying Wards was used by the John Robinson Circus in 1922. Pfening Archives.

men taking short in the alley between the menagerie and big top, some taking silver, some cutting up soft money."

All of the four Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard shows carried some form of grift in 1922 as did the vast majority of other shows. The exceptions were few indeed. However, from reports com-

kansas by a deputy sheriff. The late E. W. Adams, who was on the Gollmar show that season, was an eyewitness to the shooting and later testified at the subsequent trial. According to Adams, when he told me the story some years ago, the deputy, drinking heavily, appeared in the sideshow and started raising a fuss over the gambling going on, three card monte, shell, and even a slot machine may have been involved, although these were usually reserved for the privilege car on the train, as it was too tempting for the law to confiscate the device along with any monies inside. Anyway, the sideshow manager sent for Billy Miles, the legal adjuster, to come to the scene and try and fix the matter. Adams said that Miles, a mild mannered man, got the deputy aside and told him, just to contact his boss, the sheriff, that everything was fixed for the games to operate. But the deputy for no reason drew his gun and killed Miles on the spot. Adams remarked that the incident so shook up Jerry Mugivan that he vowed that the grift wasn't worth anything like this and the very next season, 1923, ordered it off all of his shows.

Despite what Adams said was clear and positive evidence against the deputy the court freed him following the trial. Whether or not the Miles incident did indeed cause Mugivan to stop the grift the next season, or if there were other reasons, I don't know, but in any event it ceased, although the privilege cars on the train continued.

The show was still in Louisiana as the twenty-fourth week began. Bogalusa was played on October 2, then it moved over into Mississippi to finish out the week with dates at Columbia, Brookhaven, McComb, Canton, and Durant. Then came the twenty-fifth week which would be the final of the 1922 season. A single day in Tennessee, Dyersburg, was played on October 9, then the show went north into Kentucky to play Paducah the next day, and afterwards moved into Illinois for two stands, Cairo, and Centralia. The final day of the season came at Centralia on October 12. Then the show returned to its Peru winterquarters. Total mileage for the season was 12,118 according to the routebook.

The last road report from the show came in the October 21, *Billboard*. The article said that making up in a measure

for the dry and rainless season that the John Robinson Circus had experienced, the second to last week that began at Bogalusa, Louisiana, October 2, was one of continuous rain, or rather continuous showers, for the wetness was only intermittent, allowing the parade to go out and return dry, allowing the folks to come to the show grounds without umbrellas, but always raining before the day was over. Bogalusa had the best attendance during the week.



Chris Zeitz, boss elephant man, on horseback, and the line of elephants in the Robinson parade in Houston, Texas. Walker Morris photo in Bradbury collection.

Columbia, Mississippi was only fair, while at Brookhaven it was the first day of the county fair, which, together with a terrific rain that fell between the hours of six and seven, tended to make the evening house small. However, the afternoon performance at which Mr. and Mrs. Sisler, the latter brother-in-law of Bill Curtis, boss canvasman of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, was a guest, was very good.

McComb and Canton, Mississippi on Thursday and Friday, respectively, were fair. However, business at Durant on Saturday was good. The long run of some 230 miles from Durant to Dyersburg, Tennessee was made in fifteen hours and without a mishap. Frank McGuire and Ernest Haag of the Mighty Haag Shows were guests Sunday, McGuire having closed his season with John Robinson as local contractor and joined the Haag show for the winter months.

A final note said the new route book on sale gave the season's total mileage as 12,000 odd miles, and reported one of the most prosperous seasons the John Robinson Circus had experienced.

John Robinson was the first of the Mugivan shows to close for the season. It was followed by Gollmar Bros. which moved into its quarters at Vandiver Park

in Montgomery, Alabama on October 30. Hagenbeck-Wallace closed the season at Clinton, Tennessee on November 2 and then headed to its quarters in West Baden, Indiana. Last of the shows to close was Sells-Floto, at Ardmore, Oklahoma, November 8, and as mentioned before instead of going back to its former quarters in Denver, moved on to Peru to spend the winter with John Robinson.

Once into its quarters the trade publications then became quiet on John Robinson. A single notation came in the December 30, 1922 *Billboard* which said that the hippopotamus which had been with the John Robinson Circus died at the winterquarters the week before last. The animal was Congo. She had been the first hippo ever owned by Mugivan and Bowers and had gone out for the first time on John Robinson in 1917 and had been there since, putting in six full seasons.

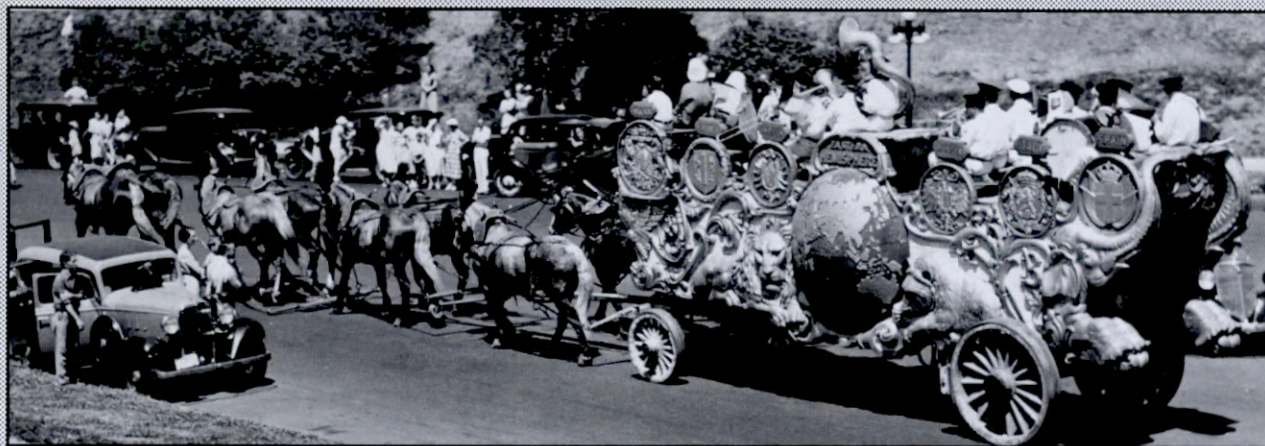
At the time the old year passed into history there was no hint that the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard combine would reduce the number of their circuses from four to three for the coming 1923 season. But they would do just that. The titles of Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and John Robinson would be retained but the Gollmar Bros. name would be dropped, although the trio still had rights to it for four more years. The Gollmar title would later be leased to Chester Monahan in 1924. Early in 1923 when it was determined the Gollmar show would not go out its equipment was sent from Montgomery to Peru where much of it would go into the 1923 version of John Robinson where the former Gollmar property was more dominant than that used on the 1922 John Robinson show.

No doubt the primary reason for the reduction of four to three road circuses in 1923 was the railroad situation which had gotten progressively worse in the fall of 1922. The American Circus Corporation, as the trade publications began calling the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard combine, would continue with only three shows until the 1929 season when they would have five, having purchased both the Sparks 20 car show and the Al G. Barnes 30 car circus. In late 1929 John Ringling purchased the American Circus Corporation. The John Robinson, Sparks and Sells-Floto circuses were soon to disappear from the American circus scene.

Season's greetings



Cliff Vargas
and the
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BURMESE GIRAFFE-NECK WOMEN and the MONSTER-MOUTHED UBANGI SAVAGES

By Robert Bogdan

It was standard sideshow practice from the days before Barnum through the 1930s for people from the non-Western world to climb on to the freak show platform to be gawked at by Americans. These non-Westerns were not necessarily individuals with disabilities, or who were unusually tall or short, or who performed some novelty like fire eating. Such unusual people were indeed displayed; but those whose only difference lay in the fact that they belonged to an unfamiliar race and culture had value as show pieces as well. Dexter Fellows, exalted press agent of the amusement world, explained: "The Borneo aborigines, the head hunters, the Ubangis, and the Somalis were all classified as freaks. From the standpoint of the showman the fact that they were different put them in the category of human oddities."

One genre of non-Western exhibits that made their way into the freak show were people whose custom it was to mechanically alter their bodies. Tattooed South Sea Islanders were exhibited in the early 19th century. Barnum, in the 1860s, exhibited a

This photo of Howard Y. Bary with eighteen giraffe neck women, taken in Burma, appeared in the booklet sold on the Ringling show in 1930.

Chinese family in the American Museum high-lighting the women's miniature feet which developed that way as a result of the practice of tightly wrapping them to inhibit their growth. While one might think that the practice of exhibiting such non-Western people in circuses would have dropped off as we moved into the twentieth century this was not the case. In fact two of the most successful non-Western body altered attractions were displayed during the 1930s.

Giraffe-Neck Women

During the 1933 and 1934 amusement seasons three women from the Padaung tribe, a people of Mongolian extraction found in northern Burma, in the foothills of the Himalaya mountains, were exhibited in American circus sideshows as the Giraffe-Neck Women from Burma. The details of their early life and other personal biographical information are unknown.

The Padaung custom of permanently stretching the necks of female children by placing brass rings about them gave the women who were exhibited their exploitable oddity. While promoters claimed that the average neck length of a Padaung woman was 16 inches, photographs of the women exhibited in the United States reveal that they were considerably shorter. None the less, their appearance was striking. The audiences were told that the matrimonial desirability of a Padaung was measured by the length and the quantity of metal on her neck.

Howard Y. Bary, a circus scout, went to Burma to secure the troupe. He returned to the States with three Pa-

daung women and the husbands of two of them. One of the men was a school teacher who knew some English and acted as interpreter and manager.

When Bary arrived with his "freaks" it was late autumn of 1932, too late for them to be booked in the 1932 season. He took them to his farm in Bucks County Pennsylvania where they endured the hard winter.

The next season, 1933, they were ready to work. They proved to be such a crowd pleasing attraction that the team of five was divided. One woman, Mu Kaun, and her husband traveled with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, which was

Princess Mu Kaun appeared with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1933 and 1934. Pfening Archives.

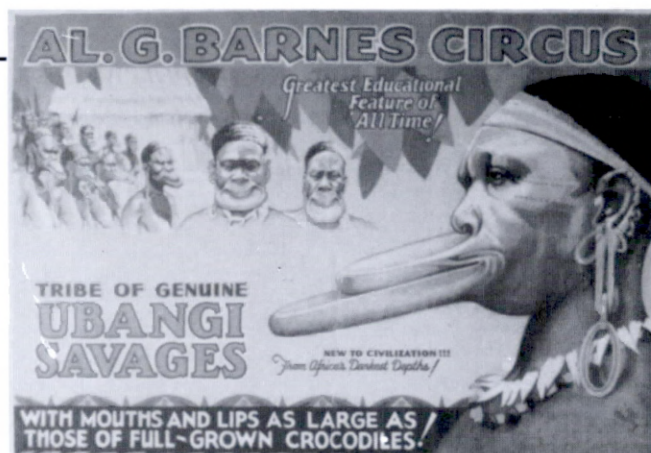
then owned by the Ringling organization. The other four were with the parent show Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey.

Roland Butler, publicity whiz for the Ringling organization, was the showman behind the publicity and presentation of the women from Burma. He is

the one who came up with the exotic and elongated title, "Giraffe-Necked." Although the women's necks were striking to view, Butler decided that for the purposes of publicity they were too short. As the story goes, he got a large wooden spool, wound it with solder wire, and had it photographed and then superimposed on the Burmese heads. The resulting image was used for the posters.

That is not the only exaggeration that went on. Although there were never more than two long necked women with the Ringling show, the 1934 posters advertising the Giraffe-Neck Women from Burma as "The Greatest Educa-



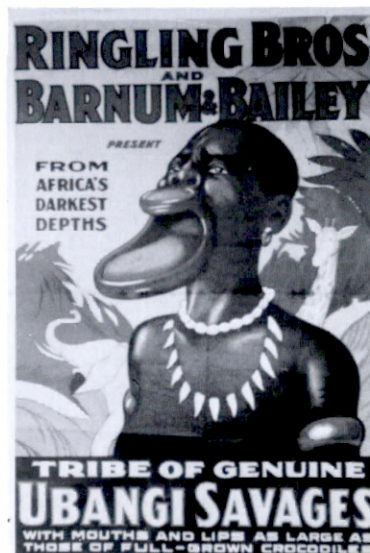
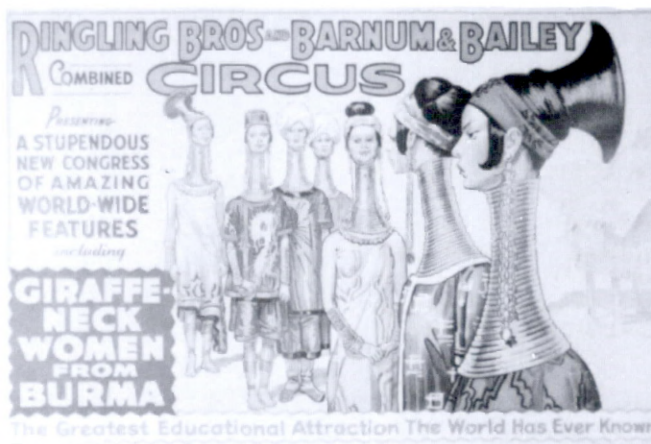


THE GIRAFFE NECK AND UBANGI WOMEN LITHOGRAPHS



Ringling-Barnum press agent Roland Butler had a field day in designing special paper for the Giraffe Neck and Ubangi women. The Ubangi posters were drawn by artist Hap Hadley and were printed by the Illinois Lithograph Co. for the 1930 Ringling season. It is interesting to note that three different styles of paper were used for this feature. The Barnes bill was printed by the Blanchard Press of San Francisco.

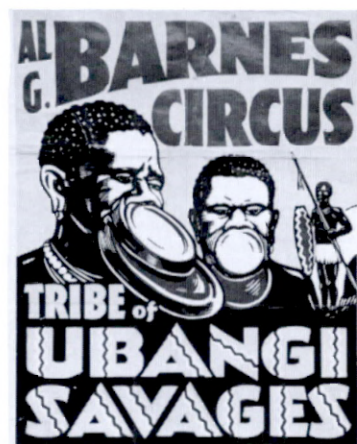
The giraffe neck women posters for both the Ringling and Hagenbeck shows were printed by Central Printing and Litho Co., of Chicago. The original lithos are from the Circus World Museum, Jim Dunwoody, Kent Ghirard and Pfening collections.



tional Attraction the World Has Ever Known," shows eight. Butler publicized the attractions as "a thousand years behind our epoch" and as "savage stealers of men." They were sometimes booked as the "Last of the Unknown People of the Earth."

A number of events were staged by circus press agents to bring attention to the attraction. Even though it was known that X-rays could not penetrate the brass rings, the circus publicity men brought one of the women to a St. Louis hospital with a newspaper photographer to be x-rayed. She was photographed as she was examined sitting beside the radiology equipment. A similar event was staged at Philadelphia General Hospital.

The pamphlet that was sold in conjunction with their appearance was extensively illustrated with photographs, including one of the heavy set Bary, with helmet in hand, standing with a group of Padaungs with his other hand draped over the shoulders of one. Two other photos show them undergoing a medical examination. The booklet is a far cry from



the extravagant and fraudulent presentations found in similar booklets from the 19th century. There are no wild tales of life-threatening tribal warfare. But even in this 1930s attraction, many elements of the earlier exotic presentations are present.

The Burmese women remained in the United States for the 1934

season, Mu Kaun on the Hagenbeck show and the other two staying with Ringling. They were quiet and cooperative, but they showed little interest in circus life and grew listless and increasingly withdrawn. When one day they could not carry out their duties, they were rushed to a hospital in St. Louis to be examined and given tests. The physicians were unanimous in finding them "home sick." They were sent home at the end of the season.

Ubangi Savages

"Genuine Monster-mouthed Ubangi Savages World's Most Weird Living Humans from Africa's Darkest Depths," the circus ad proclaimed. Although the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the most extensive exhibition of the non-Western peoples, as well as the greatest amount of hyperbole regarding their character, this ad publicized an early-1930s attraction that some showmen consider the greatest freak exhibit of the century.

The story of how this exhibit reached the United States and became a featured attraction of the Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus has several variants. The issue is merely complicated by the many gaffs and other troupes of Africans who, in the promoters' chase after the success of the "original" exhibit, were displayed as Ubangis.

According to Fred Bradna, who spent forty years with the "big one," the original "Ubangi Savages" were procured by a circus agent, Ludwig Bergonier, after seeing people from this tribe at a Paris fair. They were from the Congo, and they were distinguished from other people in the world by a peculiar custom: the women beautified themselves by enlarging their lips. This effect was accomplished by slitting female babies' lips and inserting wood-

A group of Ubangi women are pictured in the side show of the Ringling show in 1930. Pfening Archives.



en disks, with the one in the bottom lip larger than the top. By increasing the size of the disks as the child grew, the lips could be extended ten inches or more, giving them a duckbill appearance.

Realizing the potential of such an attraction, Bergonier went to the French Congo where, with promises of wealth, he persuaded a chief to allow him to take thirteen women and two men with him on tour. For two years he displayed them in Europe, and then John Ringling booked them for their U. S. appearance in the Ringling freak show.

Bradna says that Ringling paid \$15,000 a week for the exhibit; Bergonier took it all and let the Congolese make what they could by selling postcards at five cents a piece.

They arrived by boat in the spring of 1930 after the circus had opened in Madison Square Garden. Frank Cook, the same circus lawyer who had imported Clicko, the African bushman, cleared them through customs, accepted personal responsibility for them and brought them right to the show.

They were an immediate sensation; according to Bradna, at first the women's being bare above the waist attracted as much attention as their lips. In addition to appearing in the sideshow prior to the circus performance, they paraded around the hippodrome track during each main big top show. Sideshow manager Clyde Ingalls made the introduction: "Ladies and Gentlemen, from the deepest depths of darkest Africa we present the world's most astound-

ing Aborigines--the 'Crocodile Lipped Women from the Congo'--the Ubangis." Then, from the far end of the arena, they would slowly walk in, single file--the men in loincloths carrying spears, and the barefoot women wearing sacks for skirts and little else.

When the Congolese arrived in this country, they were not called Ubangis. In fact, the tribal name was made up for the purposes of presentation. According to Robert Lewis Taylor, Roland Butler was studying maps of Africa and encountered an obscure district, named Ubangi, several hundred miles from the tribe's true location. It had the proper exotic ring, and so, as Butler put it, "I resettled them."

Princess Ook-Ju-Tii Derstopy, translated as "Queen of the tribe." On Ringling in 1930. Pfening Archives.

The drawings for the poster advertisements extended the lips far in excess of reality; in some they appeared as if they had turkey platters inserted in their lips. One poster referred to them as the "greatest educational feature of all time," and they were described as having "mouths and lips as large as those of full-grown crocodiles!" Another lithograph hailed them as being "New to Civilization" and a "Tribe of Genuine Ubangi Savages."

The booklet sold in conjunction with their exhibition was entitled *Saucer Lips, Ubangi Savages, French Equatorial Africa, Historical Sketch, Origins, Habits and Customs* (1930). Emphasizing the remoteness of their village, their strange marriage and funeral cus-

A group of Ubangis on the Al G. Barnes Circus in 1932. This post card was sold on the show. Pfening Archives.



toms, it was richly illustrated with pictures of women bare to the waist.

During the 1930 season the leader of the Ubangi group began to learn that the coins received in exchange for post cards could be used to buy things. He confronted Bergonier and an ongoing battle began. It finally reached the stage where it was necessary for the circus to send Bergonier back to Sarasota as he feared for his life. From that point on the Ubganis looked out for themselves.

The Ubangis were sent to the Al G. Barnes Circus for the 1931 season. The Ringling Ubangi posters were cross lined with the Barnes title. They remained on the Barnes show for the 1932 season. The Ringling management was well aware of the value of the attraction and also featured a second group of Ubangis on Ringling-Barnum in 1932.

The *Billboard* article covering the opening of the 1932 Ringling show in New York reported that this was a different group than had appeared on the show in 1930. Mrs. Evelyn Cook, widow of Frank Cook, reports that it is doubtful that a second group was imported. She suggests that the original group of eight women and four men



Three Ubangis on the Ringling show during the 1932 season. Some of the original women stayed on the Barnes show. Pfening Archives.

was divided with some remaining on the Barnes show. Following the conclusion of their tours with the Ringling and Barnes shows the Ubangis final appearance in North America was in Toronto at the Canadian National Exposition.

It is difficult not to feel disapproval or even incredulity when confronting the presentation of non-Western people in the nineteenth and twentieth-century freak show. The exhibition of foreigners as freaks is certainly incongruent with our current perspective: not only is the idea repugnant in itself, but

the host of specific practices of presentation violate our sense of propriety. These presentations, of course, all took place before World War II and before modern communication systems brought us into regular contact with people from very different cultures.

At the time, however, Americans viewing such displays of non-Western people did not confront their own ethnocentrism. On the contrary, what they saw merely confirmed old prejudices and beliefs regarding the separateness of the "enlightened" and the "primitive" worlds; they left the freak show reassured of their own superiority by such proofs of others' inferiority. Freak show depictions of Africans as being inherently inferior and savage, arising as they did from racist attitudes, helped sustain systematic, unfair, and unequal treatment of non-whites.

Robert Bogdans' book, Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit, was recently published by the University of Chicago Press. This article contains some excerpts from that book with permission of the University of Chicago Press.

ROBERTS BROS. 3 - RING CIRCUS

Season's Greetings



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

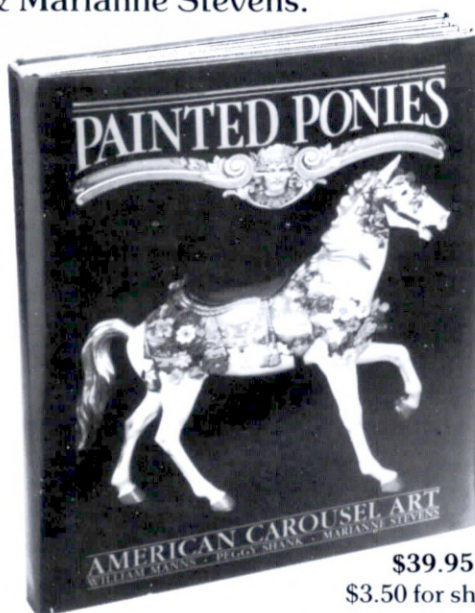
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CIRCUS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Winter Address — P.O. Box 813, Sarasota, Fla. — (813) 351-5034

Are Circus Wagons Over-Engineered?

By Ed Lester

I was wagonmaster for Royal American Shows from 1959 to 1981 which was the last year they traveled by train. While most people know me as the man who made up the RAS train lists, to the show's owners, the Sedlmayrs, I was the man who moved RAS off and on the lot. Over the years, I did just that 252 times in fair and foul weather.

In case anyone wonders why a

tires, hookups and hinged poles. As a matter of fact, we carried the number 97 ex-Ringling gorilla cage one season, plus we owned the Ringling rest room wagons and the John North automobile wagon. We used "cats" and "mules," and besides the RAS units, had three ex-Ringling D-4s, plus the "donut." We used water trucks to haul to and from the train. We had circus flats (72 footers) with gunnels and oak

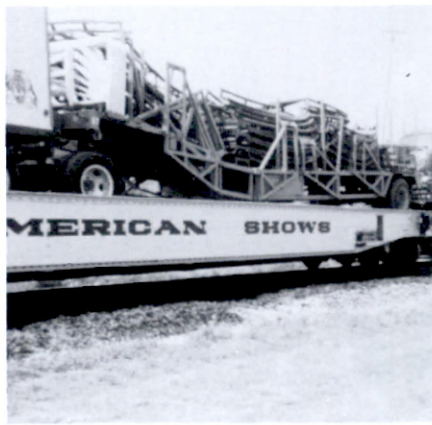
lots. St. Louis, for example, was at the last a glorified garbage dump, and earlier we had used other dirt lots. We even played an area where they had ripped out all the houses as part of a project to remove slums. This meant that wagons had to be pulled over curbs to get to the location which was true of the parking lot locations at the Memphis Cotton Carnival. The Davenport, Iowa lot, played by RAS for over fifty years,



Cat loaded with mud after coming off of a muddy lot. All photos are from the author's collection.

"carny" is talking about circus wagons, I would like to point out that RAS's wagons were the closest to Ringling-Barnum's that ever existed. Both used all steel wagons with dual balloon

Pulling and pushing a light weight M-G-R center out of mud.



A broken Toboggan wagon (trailer-type) on flat.

decks, so we could chock wagons (not chain them). We used 12 former Ringling Thrall flats plus some of their Warrens. We also had some Warrens from other shows.

RAS throughout its career played dirt

These ruts of mud show what a wagon is subjected to in being pulled off.



This lot was so muddy that a D-6 tractor was needed.

was and is a dirt lot. It also was lower than the Mississippi River levee on one side with the railroad yard on the other side, so when it rained the water would pool on the lot.

Even state fairgrounds such as the

Down to the axel in mud, just like it used to take "60 horses."





After being pulled from a rough lot the dual tires on these wagons are obscured with mud.

Kansas State Fair, were dirt. Another dirt lot was the one for the Mid-America Fair at Topeka. Many of the fairgrounds were paved, but that depends on how you define the term. Most of them either had paved walkways or paved centers. This meant that there was a lot of grassy or dirt areas for your equipment to move over before you get onto or off the lot.

I never saw 60 horses trying to get a wagon off a lot. On the other hand, I have seen a D-4 on the pole, a D-4 chained to the bull ring on each side and a fourth D-4 pushing on the back to get a wagon off the lot or into location. I remember at Davenport a D-4 pulling and another pushing trying to get the Calypso ride off the lot and miring down. We then chained a D-6 with metal cleats to the lead D-4 and still were unable to get off the location. We unhooked the D-6 and moved it to a clearer spot and ran a cable to the lead D-4 from its winch. The D-6 slid back and we finally ended the ordeal with a second D-6 hooked to the first and all four cats pulling and pushing with the winch operating before the wagon came out of its position. In both cases the wagon came out whole.

I have photos of a big D-4 (the later RAS D-4s were the size of a D-6) on the light merry go round center wagon and yet still needing a metal cleated D-6 behind. Other pictures show a power plant with only half or less of its wheels visible after we pushed it into its loca-

tion. A lot of photos show wagons that look like they were rolling on barrels because the dual tires had formed into a large ball of mud. Sometimes the tracks on the lot looked like dinosaurs had crawled on it.

Mud isn't the only stress put on a wagon. Getting a wagon into a tight location might require getting behind it and pushing on the frame. Or twisting, turning, or jerking it as you maneuver. One time I had to reposition a power plant after the 50 foot light tower had been erected on it. One year at Topeka a power plant climbed the gunnels and fell off on its back. After it was righted the only problem with it (which I had to solve) was where to put it as several flat car loads were already loaded and moving forward and we couldn't put it back in its original loading order. At Jackson, Mississippi a locomotive came out of the darkness and hit 116. While we had to make minor repairs, the wagon was basically intact.

Most people do not realize how much force is exerted on the wagons while on the train. If they have ridden on a show train and looked out onto the flats they would have noticed the wagons actually bouncing up and down. The Great Circus Train used to haul the Circus World Museum's wagons to Milwaukee each year is not a "real" experience. The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad handles the train gently and at a slow speed. RAS moved at 45 mph and often as fast as 55 mph. They ran the slack in and out, at times so much that I have been hurled out of my berth. We traveled a very large part of our fall route

A Royal American wagon being nudged into location with a Cat pushing on the frame.



on the Rock Island line before it died and the track was very rough so the cars jarred and twisted for miles at a time.

In the later years, RAS put a number of trailer wagons on the flats besides still using the circus type. Most people feel that trailers are strong and they are. We never had a circus wagon break in half, yet four trailer wagons broke in half enroute. In one case we replaced a broken trailer with a circus type wagon and never had any further problems.

Even loading or unloading wagons at the train caused strains the non-professional does not think about. Pulling three wagons up the runs with a cable fastened to a bull ring exerts considerable force on the frame of that wagon. Further, forces are applied to both the lead wagon and the followers. Forces are applied to a wagon as the "cat" backs up or twists the wagon to get it to line up with the runs.

There were times when we had to push the rear end of the wagon over with a "cat" because the crossing was too small to swing the wagon into line. On the lot a number of wagons had to be pushed sideways by two or three "cats" to get them into a tight spot. When the wagon reached its assigned spot on the train, the "mule" or "cat" on the ground had to apply considerable force to the frame of the wagon through the bull ring to slam the wagon enough against the chocks to pound the chocks down. Coming down the runs with a wagon or more after 2 or 3 wagons causes force to be applied to the "cat" through the pole and frame of the wagon and to each wagon in turn as it starts down.

On RAS we traveled to and from the train in strings of wagons pulled by trucks, just like Ringling-Barnum. We never stopped as we paid for police at each intersection to stop the other traffic. Yet since the light was green, even though the officer was indicting stop, cars would pull out ahead of the string. Our truck would have to slam to a stop. We've had cases where the wagon would jackknife and the pole would be in a "u" shape, yet the wagon itself would be as good as ever.

In conclusion, circus wagons were not overbuilt but were built to meet known conditions that would exist during the life of that wagon so that it would withstand all of the stresses and mishaps that would occur during its service.

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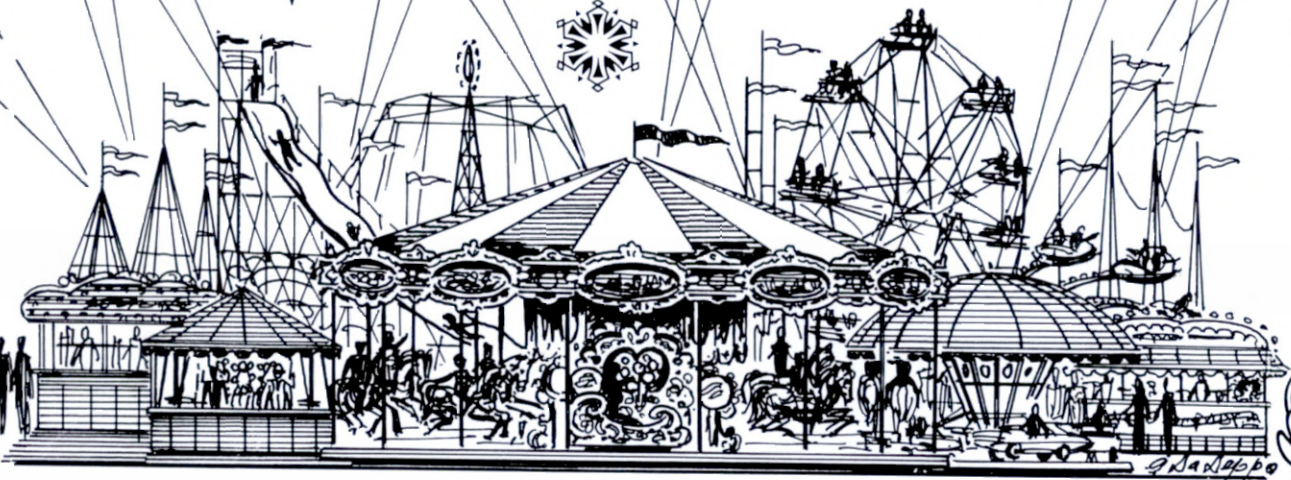
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Happy Holidays!

JIM ELLIOTT
GENERAL MANAGER





*Seasons
Greetings
and a
Happy
New Year!*

BETTE LEONARD DIES AT AGE 87

Bette Leonard, a past president of the Circus Historical Society, died on September 30, 1988, at age 87. She served the CHS as president from January 1947 until December 1957, longer than any other person.

At age 16 she joined the J. Augustus Jones Cooper Bros. Circus. She remained with that show until 1919 when she joined the Christy Bros. two car circus. In 1920 she was on the Campbell Bros. two car show. During the 1920s Bette was with the Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells-Floto, Walter L. Main and Gentry Bros. circuses. In 1928 and 1930 she was with the Elmer Jones Cole & Rogers two car show. In the early 1930s she and her husband Fred Leonard were at the Benson Wild Animal Farm. She then was with the Barnett Bros. Circus in 1934 and the Bailey Bros. show in 1935. In 1936 and 1937 she was with the Seils-Sterling Circus. In 1939 she retired from the circus business to live in Wichita, Kansas.



Mrs. Leonard was a charter member of the CHS, and her passing leaves only two of the founding members still in the roster.

She served as a member of the selection committee of the Circus Hall of Fame. Mrs. Leonard attended a number of CFA conventions and carried on an active correspondence with many fans throughout the country.

Due to ill health she had not attended any circus fan gatherings in recent years.

JACK HOXIE CIRCUS ARTICLE CORRECTIONS

There were several errors in the Jack Hoxie Circus article in the September-October 1988 *Bandwagon*. Jimmy Heron's Famous Robbins Circus did not winter in Milledgeville, Georgia in 1936-37 as printed, but instead spent the winter at Poplar Bluff, Missouri. The show did winter in Milledgeville, Georgia the previous year but did not return after the 1936 season.

The title of the William (Honest Bill) Newton, Jr. show during the 1938 season was Newton Bros. not Moon Bros. as mentioned on page 22. On page 10, the article stated Cly and Vi Newton were married in 1936. The correct year of their marriage was 1926.

The confusion encountered with the text beginning in the third column of page 20 and continuing on page 21 was caused by two pages of the original text being set in type out of sequence. These errors and technical problems are regretted.

Roger Boyd is pictured here with Mena on the Jack Hoxie Circus in 1937. The elephant was leased from E. E. Coleman for the "second" show. Boyd took care of and worked the elephant in the performance. Roger Boyd collection.



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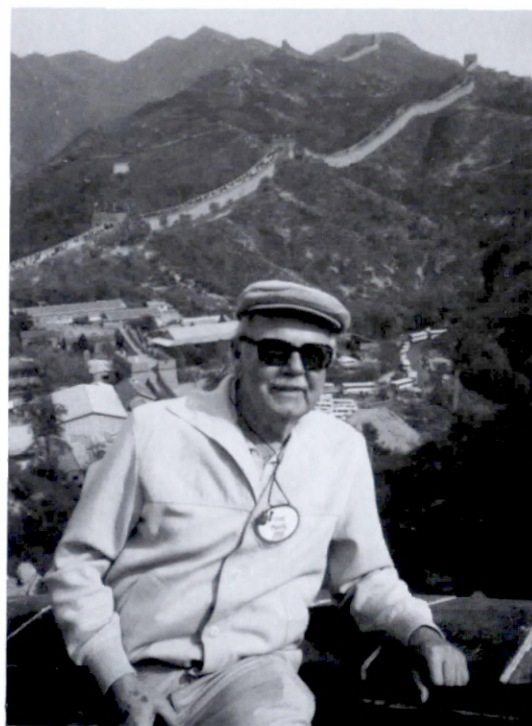
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Fred D. Pfening, Jr.
Editor





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ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

Chapter 5 Part One

A MIGHTY MAMMOTH MONARCH and GIGANTIC COLOSSUS

By Orin C. King

1881

The Kansas press provided no clue as to the fate of the Welsh and Sands organization, but in 1881, the Sells brothers sent to Kansas a new show put together in Houston, Texas bearing the title of the New Great Pacific Railroad Menagerie and Circus. The new show was under the management of S. H. Barrett who was married to a sister of the Sells brothers.

The following towns were among the dates played in Kansas: May 2, Parsons; May 3, Ft. Scott; May 9, Garnett; May 10, Emporia; May 11, Chanute; May 12, Olathe; May 13, La Cygne; May 16, Kansas City, Missouri.

"The World's Fair of Wonderland," as the show described itself in handouts, used full page ads wherever the papers could provide the space. In Garnett both the *Plaindealer* and the *Weekly Journal* carried, twice each, full page messages of the Great Pacific. The editor of the *Plaindealer* ran an apology on May 6, stating, "For the last two weeks the full-page advertisements of 'The only great blood-sweating Behemoth of Holy Writ,' etc., has rather distorted our proportions. However, *THE PLAINDEALER* has no desire to become an illustrated journal, and once more we assume our normal condition. Glad of it."

Most publishers looked on circus ads with great respect for their size and frequency of insertion, and considered the circus money so lavishly bestowed as a blessing the paper richly deserved. One questions how "glad" the editor could be at the loss of a full page of advertising in a four page paper.

The ads were liberally adorned with cuts of various features including bare-back and four-horse riders in impossible postures, a pair of hippopotamuses, a giraffe, a 14-horse liberty act, elephants, a rhinoceros, wart hog and a

gnu. The only performers mentioned by name were "THE GREAT AND ONLY ROBERT STICKNEY" as a bareback rider of outstanding ability; and Prof. Samuels, who presented an act of dogs and monkeys.

One advertised feature was the "wonderful man and woman Water Witches, in their miraculous amphibious feats beneath the water." The act of Neptune and Undine, as they were called in a handout, is not described in handouts, advertisements or reviews and remains a mystery to the author.

The show was equipped with the Great

the most difficult feats of the most celebrated bare-back equestrians, and is pronounced the most intelligent and phenomenal of all animals. The number of educated beasts is almost incredible, including not only a herd of learned elephants and among them the very largest and smallest of their species, but, by actual count, fourteen magnificent thoroughbred Kentucky horses, which were collected and taught at an actual expense of \$42,000, and all introduced at once in the ring, and exhibited in a widely diversified programme of achievements, which entirely eclipses anything of the kind heretofore known."

The story continued with a vague description of the stupendous street parade with its "three full bands and leviathan locomotive orchestra," and in conclusion asked, "The question will not be who is going, but who can be kept away?"

The last issue of the *Plaindealer* before show day, May 9, was published May 6, and was nearly paranoid in its fears for the security of the community.

"Beware of pickpockets."

"Keep your back doors locked while you watch the circus procession from the front."

Having done his duty in warning the public about grifters, the editor felt obliged to offer a bit of pompous advice to the young ladies of Garnett: "Now girls, try and win the respect of the townspeople by conducting yourself in a modest, lady-like and decorous manner on show day. Remember, please, that the eyes of half the town will be upon you, to gossip about and magnify your every indiscretion. A confidence once shaken, is seldom firm again."

Apparently the editor was needlessly worried for the safety of the townspeople and the behavior of the young women. The following review must have been a comfort to him.

THE AWE-STROCK ASTRONOMER DISCOVERING THE NEW STAR GREAT PACIFIC.
THE MIGHTY CENTRAL SUN OF THE MENAGERIE AND CIRCUS SYSTEM.



THE NEW GREAT PACIFIC. THE MOST STUPENDOUS
MENAGERIE & CIRCUS EVER ORGANIZED.

The Great Pacific Circus used this most unusual lithograph of an astronomer in 1881. It was printed by the Strobbridge Co. Circus World Museum collection.

Perfect Electric Light, "itself a \$30,000 show." Other amazing excitements were described in a handout in the *Plaindealer*, April 22.

The Great Pacific boasted of the "only \$30,000 White Nile Hippopotamus--and certainly he must be not only Job's Behemoth, but the most interesting of all the monster beasts. Scarcely less deserving of editorial fame is the gigantic Chacma, a monkey of man size and herculean strength, which not only exactly imitates but far surpasses

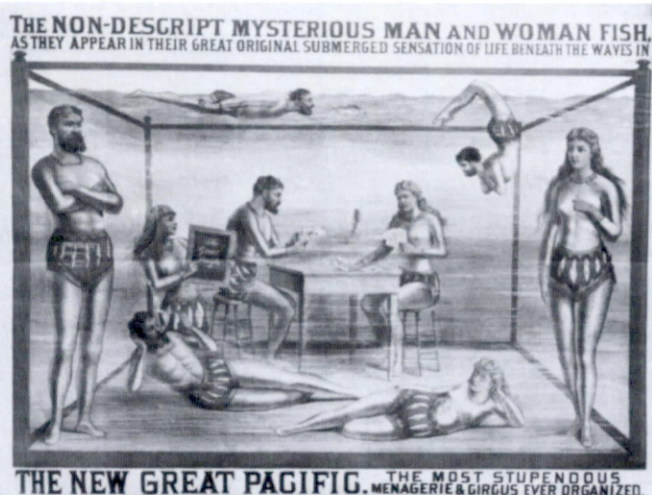
"Summed up in a nut-shell, the exhibitions given by the Great Pacific Circus and Menagerie were rather above the average, and the management no doubt merited all the patronage they received. The tent was well filled with country folks during the afternoon performances; but in the evening, they had all gone to their homes, and the townspeople only served to half fill the benches. We note as a praise-worthy feature, that the performance was remarkably free from vulgarity. The horde of gamblers, pick-pockets and thieves which usually follows along with such exhibitions was wonderfully scarce on this occasion, and we have yet to learn of the first loss from this source. The gentlemen who manage the concern have dealt with us liberally, and we can do no less than say that we have found them a pleasant set of fellows to do business with."

In another column, the *Plaindealer* reported that, "After the show, a young man was heard to ask his girl how she liked the circus. Her answer made him blush clear to the back of his neck: 'Well, John it would have been just splendid if them nasty, brazen hussies had not come out there almost n---, I mean, without any clothes on, hardly. I declare the sight just shocked my modesty!' It did mine, too, said John."

Full page ads appeared in two issues of the *Emporia News* touting the exhibitions of May 10. The advertising car of the Great Pacific arrived in Emporia on the 23rd of April, and the town was thoroughly posted. The night of the 23rd a violent storm blew down the huge bulletin board the show had erected earlier in the day. The *News* hoped that the circus lithographs "will not be mistaken for the newest fashion plates."

Following the performances the only comment from the press was that, "One of the sea lions belonging to the New Great Pacific Circus, died at this place Tuesday. It was valued at \$250. The tapir was also quite sick, the close damp weather of the past few days being very prejudicial to the general health of the menagerie."

Three hundred feet of billboards were erected in Chanute, heralding the exhibi-



An underwater act was advertised in this 1881 New Great Pacific lithograph. Dunn-Tibbals collection.

tions of Wednesday, May 11. The Sells brothers believed strongly in the value of advertising and spent accordingly.

The Chanute *Times* carried an ad three columns wide and the length of the page, which certainly could not be overlooked by any reader, but the *Inter-State* at Humboldt, nine miles away, promoted the show with an advertisement not only the full length of the page, but *four* columns wide. If either paper could have furnished the space, the show would undoubtedly have purchased a full page.

The *Times* reported that the show arrived on schedule and the treasurer paid the advertising bill, "which is a very commendable feature for this show."

"The street parade was the best ever seen in our town," the *Times* continued,

Robert Stickney was the featured rider on the New Great Pacific Circus in 1881. Pfening Archives.



featuring "three brass bands, a steam calliope." A free juggling act, "skillfully done," was presented on the show grounds. "The entertainment in the ring was pronounced as good as usual by all who attended."

In another column the *Times* reported that John Carter sponsored a man on horseback who went down the street just ahead of the parade displaying a sign telling people who wanted "cheap groceries" to patronize Carter.

The editor of the Humboldt *Inter-State*, who attended the Chanute exhibition, pronounced the performance "A-

1." "We can certainly say that Mr. C. W. Allison, the gentlemanly agent, is the most accommodating man that ever traveled with a show. The proceeds were very large and speaks very well for Chanute."

Friday the 13th, May 13, was a lucky day for the New Great Pacific as it appeared in La Cygne before a matinee audience that occupied "nearly every seat in the large tent." According to the *Weekly Journal*, "The evening show was not so largely attended as the one in the afternoon, and the programme was so badly 'cut' as to give universal dissatisfaction and cause general complaint."

Friday the 13th was an unlucky day for the citizens who met the "gang of swindlers" who infested the town on show day. The *Journal* reported that, "A number of men, old enough to keep their money for the necessities of life, gave away hard earned savings for nothing. One elderly man was swindled out of fifty dollars, all the money he had."

In La Cygne the New Great Pacific erected 400 feet of billboards when the advance car stopped in the city on April 25.

The most interesting aspect of the La Cygne date, the size of the train, was reported in the *Journal*, May 21.

"A special engine of the Gulf road took the New Great Pacific, in twenty-five cars, from La Cygne to Lamar, Mo., after the circus and menagerie exhibition in this city."

S. H. Barrett was a good showman with a first-class show.

1883

The Great Western Circus and

Trained Animal Show of James T. Johnson and Company was a Kansas institution and had been for many years. Johnson first appeared in Kansas in 1866, and in later years wintered in southern Kansas, probably in the vicinity of Independence.

The top of the bill in 1883 belonged to Mrs. James T. Johnson and her "beautiful Trained Trick Horses, Sir Henry, Blue Rocket, Spot and Beauty." Below the name of Mrs. Johnson in the advertisement carried by the *Chanute Times* for the exhibitions of Monday, May 14, were the names of Mlle. Edith, Mrs. Carrie Deanbrey, La Petite Mollie and Marco and Reno.

Marco and Reno performed "feats most wonderful, hanging by their toes, with heads enveloped in sacks, drops, straight leaps, pirouettes, and daring double-ankle leap."

La Petite Mollie was described as "THE LILIPUTIAN WONDER!", aged 7 years, the Child Prodigy, introducing JANUARY, the Smallest Trick Pony in the World."

Mlle. Edith displayed "Graceful and Dashing Feats of Horsemanship."

Mrs. Deanbrey, assisted by the "Infant Wonders on the Ladder of Life," were claimed to be the "only three females in the world performing this beautiful, but daring feat."

The advertisement announced that at ten o'clock on the morning of the exhibition the "Mammoth BAND CHARIOT drawn by Ten superbly caparisoned horses" would appear on the principal streets.

Johnson proclaimed that his circus was "THE BOSS SHOW OF THE SEASON! Indisputably the Grandest and most stupendous aggregation of amusement of either ancient or modern times," featuring "A Meteoric Constellation of the World's Arenic Stars," but the boasting misled no one for all Kansas knew that the Great Western was merely a wagon show of modest proportions, capable of providing a pleasant diversion of an hour or so.

Johnson played Neodesha, Saturday May 12, and made a Sunday jump to Chanute, pitching its tents on Fourth Street for the exhibitions of Monday, May 14. After circus day had come and gone the *Chanute Times* reported that the Great Western was "well attended considering its attractions. The ring performance was nearly equal to the average. The soap vendor and wheel of fortune men were on hand as usual to take in the fool's dollar."

The Humboldt *Union* on May 19, speaking of the exhibitions in that town on Tuesday, May 15, had many complaints against the Johnson aggre-

gation and the city authorities with regard to gambling.

On Wednesday, May 16, the show played Yates Center. The editor of the *Yates Center News* was kind to the Great Western and flattering to Johnson and his wife as parents.

14th Season. First Visit in Four Years.

And Now the Greatest of the Great, at

Appleton, Friday, June 22nd.

Two performances. Doors open at 1 o'clock and 7 o'clock, p. m.

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The World's Champion Leaper.
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De Avin, the Phantom Lady.
Aerial Giant in Wax.
A Motley Agile Circus.
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Nothing identified with the past.

And 5,000 Features Impossible to Here Catalogue.
NO MISREPRESENTATION. NO EXAGGERATION.

All the world over recognized as the "biggest big show" and this season ten times greater than ever.

See the Princely Procession and Out Door Sights.

Admission 50c. Children under 10, half price. Reserved, cushioned, Opera chairs at a slight advance.

This W. W. Cole newspaper ad was used for the Appleton, Wisconsin stand on April 2, 1883. Circus World Museum collection.

"For simply a circus their selections are certainly good, several of them being the best we have ever witnessed. We refer to the infant wonders, Mollie and Ella, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, aged 8 and 11 years respectively (the children, not the parents), on the 'ladder of life,' Miss Ella in her inimitable mid-air ring feats, Messrs. Corvella and Courtney in their difficult and dangerous exhibitions upon the trapeze, and the wonderful manipulation of Prof. Eldora, the juggler, all of which are the best exhibitions in their respective departments that we have ever seen."

On the night of the exhibitions the *News* reported that, "We had a terrific rain accompanied by wind, vivid lightning and deep throated thunder."

The *News* wished Johnson well, stating that he "certainly seems a gentleman, pays his bills as he goes, has an orderly, well-mannered troupe, and we trust to hear someday that he has reached the clearing at the other side of the woods."

Burlington saw the show on May 19, and dismissed it in one sentence. "The circus has come and gone, and the average young man is lighter in pocket and wiser in mind."

Johnson appeared at Melvern on May 22, and Osage City on May 23, but nothing is known of those two days.

The story for Silver Lake on June 1, was in accord with the Humboldt report on the gamblers. The *Topeka Mail* ran the dispatch of its "Special Correspondent" for Silver Lake, a village hardly more than a wide place in the road eleven miles west of Topeka, on June 7.

"We understand that as a circus it was a success to the proprietor, and we must say, a more orderly, quiet, well behaved gentlemen and ladies comprising the troupe we have never met. But what we wish most to notice is that class of followers, which, like barnacles to a ship, seem a part of it, yet are only incidental to it, like fleas on a dog. There were four of these parties, who obtained 'license' of our powers to carry on a little 'outside' business on the main business square sidewalk, flanked on either side by a saloon in full blast. Business opens and so do the purses of many, and the eyes of balance. First was exhibited the 'what is it,' composed of a lot of knives stuck up on a box, then a lot of iron rings, and a manager, whose business was to keep a sharp look-out for the 'lucky man, the lucky man,' six rings for twenty-five cents. Then the lucky man would pitch the rings among the knives and be the 'legitimate owner of all his rings encircled.' This stand was well patronized, and several obtained 'legal' right or possession of a knife, for was it not a licensed business, and so many tried it on, who would not, under any circumstances, be parties to any snide arrangement. Who's the lucky man?"

"Second, was an innocent wheel of fortune, where you bought a paddle or paddles, with numbers on and the wheel went round and round, till at last it stopped, and the pointer indicated a number on the big innocent wheel, and as it corresponded with the number on your paddle, the holder paddled away with the pot, or else kept on till 'busted.' Our high functionaries took

hold of these paddles and paddled in for a fortune. Some of our business men left their stores and for a time went paddling. Why not! The authorities had licensed the innocent wheel and paddles, and of course it would not be gambling. The manager paid for the privilege, and men and boys paid for the paddles, and while the manager drew the crowd the victims drew first their pocket-books, then when the wheel turned they drew--their breath.

"Third. This innocent institution is commonly called a chuck-a-luck. It had a manager, or money taker, and had an audience of one man, too full, for utterance, and a small boy who looked out of luck--and from this scene we passed on to the grand central stand.

"Fourth. 'Hoss races.' Rarus, Luna, and a number of trotting celebrities, in picture, pasted on triangular portions of a circle, over which were three metal arrows with pin through centre, the turning of which one stops, at a time, and points to the 'lucre' piled or bet on a favorite steed. This was the 'Baden Baden,' and all you had to do was to put down your money, the manager generally took it up. So it was real easy playing hoss race. Many went in for a fortune this way, and bucked the tiger till late at night. But the tiger managed to do most of the winning, and took a big swallow whenever a sum large enough was up. Oh, it was nice, maybe a little naughty, but then it was licensed, and of course, yes, of course, here were to be seen in close attendance on the races, and crowding closely elbow to elbow, for a better chance to place their dollars or nickels, according to previous wealth, on their steeds--the trustee and the trusted, the J P and the P J, the G D and the D G, the retired S D and the tired D S, the rich S K and the poor K S, and the small boy with a letter in the postoffice. But all things must come to an end, and as we end this we trust there will be from this time forever an end of our authorities licensing a lot of gamblers to operate boldly and all day long a series of low gambling games."

On June 2, Johnson played Meriden and it may have been the only circus to ever play that town.

Advance agent Lew Cole called on the Valley Falls *Register* on May 30 to place an ad for the exhibitions of June 7. The *Register* made no comment concerning gambling and gave the show a good report.

"Johnson's circus attracted a large crowd to town on Thursday, and everyone seemed pleased with what they saw and heard. Their exhibition here was well received and for all they claim we can recommend them to the public wherever they may pitch their pavilion."

Johnson went into winter quarters in Neosho Falls, or the Queen City as it proudly called itself, at an unknown date in 1883, but his presence was reported November 16, by the Neosho Falls *Post*.

"Jas. Johnson, the great showman, with a portion of his mammoth circus

will rank them among the first in their profession. 'January,' the old original pony, 33 years of age, loses none of his old time reputation as an educated animal. Mr. Wheeler is a young man of extraordinary talent as a comedian. The orchestra is a good one. In short it is a very entertaining and enjoyable exhibition. The gifts distributed at each entertainment create great excitement and some are quite valuable. Next entertainment will be a drama. Mr. Johnson is a gentleman that merits success, as he no doubt will have, in this new feature of hall entertainments."

W. W. Cole in 1883 brought his New Colossal Shows (Consolidated) to Kansas early in May and again late in September, playing among others, the following cities: May 8, Oswego; May 12, Ottawa; May 14, Kansas City; May 15, Leavenworth; May 16, Atchison; May 17, Washington; May 18, Mankato; May 19, Concordia; May 21, St. Joseph, Missouri; September 28, Girard; October 1, Olathe (Matinee only); October 2, Ottawa (Repeat); October 3, Humboldt; October 4, Independence; October 11, Marion; October 12, Emporia; October 13, Parsons.

The Oswego *Independent* was stingy with its columns concerning show day, May 8, reporting only that, "The street parade was very fine," and, without any explanation, that, "Tuesday was a field day for whiskey."

Featured in several newspapers was a handout concerning Samson, the show's biggest elephant, described as "the giant elephant, by the side of whom the largest of his kind are but dwarfs and whose bulky sides would put a mastodon within his shadow, is authentically declared to be the largest Asiatic elephant ever brought to America or ever in captivity for that matter, besides being as docile as a kitten and as peaceful a playmate as any child could wish."

Giving a better indication of the size of Samson was the statement that, "He is capable of carrying one hundred people on his back at a single load." Huge, indeed!

Cole's advertising car arrived in Ottawa, April 26 and papered the town thoroughly, announcing the exhibitions of May 12.

The Ottawa *Republican* felt duty-bound to warn its readers to

"LOOK OUT FOR THIEVES

"It will be well for those citizens



Mildred Gardner is shown on this 1883 Strobridge bill produced for the W. W. Cole Circus. Pfening Archives.

and menagerie, has taken up winter quarters in the Queen City. He has a dramatic troupe with him, and will occasionally dart out from his snug winter quarters and give a few entertainments in the neighboring towns."

In another column the *Post* announced the first of the performances of Johnson's Parlor Circus and Comedy company on Tuesday evening November 20, at Clark's hall in Neosho Falls.

"Doors open at 7 o'clock. All ticket holders will have a chance to draw a fine prize of household goods, teas sets, jewelry, etc., on that night. Reserved seats for sale at the postoffice."

The *Post*, November 23, reviewed the performance: "The Parlor Circus and Comedy company gave their first entertainment of the season in Clark's hall, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings of this week. They have a good entertainment. Their programme is something new, and will receive a liberal patronage wherever they go. Misses Mollie and Ella are the favorites, and have excellent talent which, when developed,



who propose to attend the circus to-night in defiance of the elements, to observe extra caution in fastening their houses, for a gang of bold sneak thieves and craksmen are hanging upon the skirts of the circus, and are known to be in the city to-day. Last night at Harrisonville, where the circus exhibited, they entered a number of buildings and secured a considerable quantity of booty, beside relieving the pockets of numberless individuals of pocket-books, watches, etc. They are not attaches of the circus, but chaps of the (ostensibly) tramp order, who are said to be very expert. Sheriff Ingrahm and a posse of men from Harrisonville came over on the circus train, and in conjunction with Mo. officials and the circus detective corps, have made every effort to capture the rascals, but in vain."

The avoidance of city licenses was a game played by all traveling shows and Cole's advance agent was an eager contestant. To avoid the \$70 fee demanded by the City of Ottawa, the agent found a lot a considerable distance from the center of the city, but the scheme failed, for on show day it was determined that the chosen lot was within the city limits and the show was required to pay the fee.

The day was marred by heavy rains causing the parade to be cancelled. The *Republican* reported a down pour of six inches.

"The exhibitions of Cole's circus," the *Republican* commented, "were of course given under the most unfavorable of circumstances, yet we have heard nothing but commendation of it. It was really excellent, and considering the natural condition of the track and apparatus after and during a soaking rain, extraordinarily so. Many of the feats were novel, and all well executed; particularly the trapeze performance, the ceiling walk, the bicycle performances, and the marvelous feats of strength and agility of the Arab troupe. The attendance was astonishingly good. The concerts, of course, were an unmitigated swindle."

The W. W. Cole show posted a number of 100 sheet stands of paper during the 1883 season. This is an example. Pfening Archives.

The day was a personal abomination for James Robinson who bumped his nose so hard while performing with a hoop that minor surgery was required.

Featured in newspaper advertising was a cut of performers riding bicycles over a high wire. It should be remembered that the cycles of the day were not the modern safety bike, but were of the high front wheel variety.

The people of Ottawa were much amused by the Arab acrobats wandering about the streets in their native costumes topped with red fezzes. The warning against thieves was apparently unnecessary for the papers failed to report a rash of burglaries, the only complaint being from a showman who reported the theft of a valuable watch and \$35 in cash, taken from the show train.

The *Mankato Review* reported, May 3, that, "The bill car got here last Saturday night (April 28), to the immense delight of the small boys, (and all the other boys) and now the gaudy pictures of animals and snakes, and such, are all over town." Mankato was billed for May 18.

In 1883 Cole experimented with 100 sheet billboards for the St. Louis stand, but they were abandoned as being too costly (\$10). The billboards erected by the show on April 28 were blown down by a storm on the 6th of May, but were restored by advance car No. 2 the following day. The *Jewell County Monitor*, Mankato, carried an interesting handout on May 9, which reported the 100 sheet lithographs and also mentioned the train. The handout claimed 36, sixty foot cars painted milk white with red lettering shaded in black. A reporter for the *Mankato Review* could find only twenty-five cars hauled by two locomotives.

A feature of Cole's advance was a group of trumpeters who appeared in

the chosen town a few days ahead of the show. In Mankato Fred W. Mears and his musicians arrived on the 12th, with Mears making the announcements following a stirring fanfare.

The *Review* was full of circus news after the show had come and gone.

"Fully six thousand people, by far the largest crowd ever in Mankato witnessed the grand street parade.

"The Principal, Mr. Allen, called school at the usual hour, but finding only one scholar in the school room, concluded that he would dismiss school and take in the show himself.

"The seats inside were all full and many had to sit on the ground.

"The entertainment, though not up to the expectations of many, was good, for this western country.

"A resident of one of our townships outmeasured the circus giant.

"The heavy wagons broke the culvert bridge at one crossing in town.

"Where is your White Buffalo' an old man asked of an animal keeper. 'Oh! he died last year' was the reply.

"A farmer's wife after it was over, said as she took a butter bucket from the store clerk, 'I guess I'll go home now. I have spent five dollars at the show.'"

Concordia on May 19, gave Cole a matinee audience of an estimated 8,000 persons and the *Blade* reported that, "We have yet to hear of the first person who was not mad, and all because of the miserable conduct of a score or so of hoodlums." There was no explanation given.

Cole was back in Kansas four months later, playing Girard on September 28, and arousing no comment from the papers.

On his second invasion of Kansas, Cole mentioned individual performers in his newspaper ads, including the world-renowned James Robinson; Mlle. Aime, the Humani Fly; Nestor and Veno, Gymnasts. For Olathe, Monday, October 1, the show invited "All business houses, traders and manufactories" to join the great "Street Demonstra-

tion." The date was Cole's first visit to Olathe.

The show arrived on Sunday about 10 a. m. and erected their tents in a leisurely fashion, viewed by a great number of townspeople. The tribe of Zulus on the show did a brisk business selling pin cushions to the public.

There are no estimates of attendance at the matinee, but the crowd in town must have been immense for Miller, the town baker, sold over 2,000 loaves of bread. The evening performance was cancelled because of a severe storm.

The Olathe *Mirror-Gazette* reported that, "A heavy rain began about six o'clock Monday evening, just as the show was about to open for the evening's performance, and rained for about two hours as hard as it ever does in this country. It prevented their going ahead with the show and consequently the tents were taken down and everything put aboard the cars preparatory to going to Ottawa where they were billed for Tuesday, but not until some damage had been done to the canvas by the wind, tearing it in several places, and also upsetting a few of the wagons, cages, etc."

October 2, was Cole's second appearance of the season in Ottawa. The *Daily Republican* ran a paragraph that was used in other towns. "W. W. Cole is forty-two, unmarried, very rich, and very eccentric. He dresses very plainly, and probably does not say a dozen superfluous words in a year. His mother accompanies the show."

The *Republican* made the following report after the show had gone:

"THE CIRCUS.

"Cole's circus did not give that degree of satisfaction yesterday that it did on its appearance here last spring. The street parade, while it was composed of a goodly number of animal cages on wheels, was nothing at all brilliant or 'gorgeous'--there was nothing of the 'glittering pageant' about it that was advertised. At the grounds two small rings contained all that was offered for the amusement of the goodly crowd that assembled, and the acts were in the main common-place. Their performers appeared to be careless, and in a hurry to get through with their several acts. There was a noticeable lack of several prominent features that were shown here before, and that were really good.

Even the Arab troupe has dwindled into insignificant numbers, several novices of pronounced Caucasian type appearing for the nonce as brown-faced children of the desert. The circus as a whole was not good."

Perhaps the show was not as good as it had been in the spring, but another story in the *Republican* revealed how a showman helped keep order in the city.

"Frank the kid," one of the New York waifs, who drives Heck's ice-wagon, became obstreperous in Kennedy's billiard hall last night, and when requested by



This illustration is from a courier used by W. W. Cole in 1883. The booklet was printed by the Courier Co. Pfening Archives.

the attendant to retire, refused, and became abusive. A quarrel ensued, in which the 'kid' was summarily hustled out of doors. He returned shortly, it is said with a knife, and 'ran a muck' about the crowded tables. One of the circus hands laid him out with a billiard cue, and he was again turned out. Thereupon he set up a cry for the police, at which patrolman Murphy put in an appearance, and took him off to jail."

The show wanted to exhibit on ground owned by H. P. Welsh, and once again the agent outsmarted himself. Welsh asked a rent of \$50 and told the 24-hour man that he must pay it the night before the exhibition. On show day the agent cagily offered Welsh \$25, and was informed that the land was not available at any price. The agent had to scurry about and find another lot.

At Humboldt for the exhibitions of October 3, the show put up 400 feet of billboards on the north and east sides of the park, which according to the *Union* "are now decorated with about the best and most attractive show bills we ever saw."

The only memorable event about the Humboldt date was a visit from Dan Rice who was residing temporarily in Garnett, 35 miles away. Rice was involved in the demise of Nathans & Company's show and was awaiting a settlement of several legal actions involving back wages. Rice, who had known Cole from birth, called him his "baby boy."

Cole exhibited at Marion under great difficulties on October 11. At the Wichita stand two days previously a storm "smashed to smithereens" one of the center poles. At Marion the show was presented without a canvas roof which according to the *Marion Record*, "made it very uncomfortable for the people, especially at night, when it drizzled rain. But the folks were there in great numbers. They always are."

The *Record* was incensed about the horde of gamblers--"the number was greater than ever before"--who infested the city. "Our city authorities would cover themselves with glory if instead of giving these rascals the privilege of gambling on our streets they would give the ground bounce." Ground bounce?

The *Parsons Daily Sun*, reviewing the performances of Saturday, October 13, gives us, perhaps, the best image of the Cole show.

"THE CIRCUS.

"W. W. Cole's circus and menagerie reached the city from Emporia at 8:30 yesterday morning. The street parade was made at noon and was quite attractive. Among the interesting features may be mentioned the golden car, drawn by four elephants, the cage of lions, with their trainer seated in their midst, a troupe of genuine Bedouins, a drove of camels, the mammoth elephant which ranks second in size to Jumbo, the chariot driven by a lady and drawn by four milk-white chargers, two good brass bands, the calliope, etc. The horses are very fine, which is always a good indication with a circus. The afternoon performance began at 3 o'clock, and gave very general satisfaction to the tremendous crowd of people who witnessed it. Not less than eight thousand people were in attendance. Every available seat was filled and not even standing room was left. It was, perhaps, the largest crowd ever seen at a

circus here. The performance last night commenced at 8 o'clock and was also very largely attended, the crowd being almost as great as in the afternoon. During both performances advantage was taken of the immense crowd and every known scheme of robbing the people was resorted to. There was only one man selling tickets in the box office, and he appeared to be in no hurry, while a dozen or more had satchels filled with tickets which were sold among the crowd at from 60 cents to a dollar. When people arrived at the main entrance of the show many of those who had children with them were forced to give up a half dollar in place of the half-price tickets, and one and two year old infants were charged half price. There was also some complaint of the wrong change having been made in cases where bills were given the ticket seller. The show is a good one, but the people connected with it are hard characters, to say the least."

Late in May of 1883, Cooper, Jackson & Company was billing itself as Cooper, Jackson and Company's New Gigantic Railroad Shows, Wembwells English Menagerie and Orsinis' Oriental Circus and Hippodrome, or, for short, Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s New Gigantic Show.

Among Kansas towns honored with exhibitions were the following: May 30, Clay Center; June 4, Wamego; June 5, Alma; June 6, Eskridge; June 7, Council Grove; June 11, Marion; June 14, El Dorado; June 15, Augusta; June 20, Howard; June 26, Humboldt; June 27, Iola; June 29, Toronto; July 7, Osaloosa; July 9, Valley Falls; July 11, Holton; July 13, Whiting; Winter Quarters, Valley Falls.

The Clay Center *Dispatch*, May 24, carried an ad for the show, but in its news columns made no mention of coming attractions or commented when the show had gone.

The only advance notice published in the *Kansas Reporter*, Wamego, for the exhibition of Monday, June 4, was one sentence, "Don't forget the Cooper & Jackson circus on Monday next." There was no advertisement. Despite short notice and lack of newspaper support the show apparently did well enough, for the *Reporter* reported that, "Everybody and his girl attended the circus on Monday."

The paper hinted at a mystery in the side show with the comment, "We would like to have Meninger, Hamaker, Farnham, George Peddicord, Robinson and some others tell what they saw in the side show last Monday night." The

THE BIG SHOW.

COOPER, JACKSON & CO'S.
Great International
ALLIED SHOWS,

Will Exhibit at
EAGLEVILLE, MONDAY, JULY 30.



Combining in its organization a

**COLOSSAL MENAGERIE and
GREAT MORAL CIRCUS.**

The company, 100 strong, is unequalled in number, and excels in ability that of any organization now before the public. Introducing the stars of all nations in a sensational selection of the most startling of Equestrian Gymnastic and Acrobatic feats ever witnessed.

AN ARENIC ENTERTAINMENT

Of unsurpassed excellence. The astonishing amusements are also augmented by the additional introduction of performing animals, etc.

BOLIVAR.

THE MIGHTY WAR ELEPHANT.

Fairly makes the ground tremble as he moves, aware of being the largest Elephant on exhibition.

Miss. Clarinda Lowando, the Queen of Bareback Riders.
The Mighty Minnetta, the woman with the Iron Jaw.
DAVID CASTELLO, Challenge Bareback Rider.

EARTH, AIR & SEA
Contribute to our Menagerie Marvels. Two exhibitions daily, afternoon and night.
ADMISSION, 50 Cents. Children under 9, 25 Cents.

Remember the date, Monday, July 30th.

The Cooper, Jackson & Co's. Great International Shows used this newspaper ad during the 1883 tour. Pfening Archives.

only comment on the performance concerned the iron jaw exhibition when "some cuss remarked that the strength of her jaws was not so remarkable as her ability to keep them closed for so long a time."

For a few days in early June Cooper-Jackson faced competition from a small wagon show, James T. Johnson & Co.'s Great Western Circus and Trained Animal Show working its way north as the larger show moved south on the rails.

Johnson played Wamego on May 29, beating Cooper-Jackson by six days. Cooper-Jackson exhibited at Alma on June 5, eight days behind Johnson who made the town on May 28. Johnson showed at Eskridge, on May 26; Cooper-Jackson arrived in the town on June 6.

Publication dates for the three weekly

papers--Wamego, Alma, Eskridge--did not justify "Wait" advertising for Cooper-Jackson, because the Cooper-Jackson advance was advertising in papers after Johnson had come and gone. At Eskridge, Cooper-Jackson proclaimed in the *Home Weekly* "WAIT FOR THE BIG CIRCUS!", five days after the Johnson exhibition.

The three towns missed an opportunity to compare the two shows, although the papers displayed a bias in favor of Cooper-Jackson, sight unseen. The *Home Weekly*, Eskridge, thought that, "From the looks of the mammoth show bills of Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s circus which ornament our town, the show next Wednesday will well pay the attendance of the circus going public."

In a paragraph immediately following the above the *Home Weekly* reported that, "Johnson's circus has come and gone. It was not well patronized by our people, very many preferring to wait until Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s circus exhibits here, which will be next Wednesday, June 6th."

While Cooper-Jackson was at Wamego, June 4, Dan Castello went to Topeka to receive a well-trained ring horse from Michigan.

On June 6, George S. Cooper went to Topeka to take in the S. H. Barrett show and see what was new in the big time.

The *Kansas Cosmos*, Council Grove, reporting on the exhibitions of June 7, stated that, "The 'monster' parade of the circus last Thursday proved to be a rather tame affair. A large number of people took in the circus and they got pretty well taken in themselves." Cooper-Jackson was a railroad show which on purely snobbish grounds indicated some measure of superiority over mud shows, and the pain must have been sharp when *Cosmos* claimed "the performance in the ring was about up to the average of wagon shows."

Featured in every Cooper-Jackson newspaper advertisement was Bolivar, "THE MIGHTY WAR ELEPHANT." Bolivar "fairly makes the ground tremble as he moves majestic, aware of his proud fame of being the LARGEST ELEPHANT ON EXHIBITION. It is worthy of remark in this connection to state that Bolivar's tusks are eight feet in length."

There is no record to indicate that Bolivar ever participated in any military campaigns, but there is little doubt that Bolivar was at war with the world in general, for he had a reputation as an unruly, unstable, unforgiving enemy of his caretakers.

On Monday evening, June 11, at Marion, Bolivar set forth on a holiday

of his own devising. The Marion *Record* reported, "The circus elephant got away from his keeper, Monday evening, and did considerable business not on the bills. He went through Ed Baxter's garden, without being very particular about keeping in the walks, and when Ed went to the door to drive him off, thinking it was dogs tearing around his premises, he was considerably startled to see the huge beast standing but a few feet off, and without the ceremony of inviting him in the door was slammed shut in less time than it takes to tell it. He then took a turn through the fine orchard on Levi Billings' place, tearing up many of the bearing trees, creating quite a loss for that gentleman. After fooling around in this manner he went to the water, and it was about the middle of the forenoon, next day, when he was found and got out of the stream some distance south of town. Messrs. Billings and Baxter compromised their respective losses, the former for fifty and the latter for seven dollars."

The aggregation played El Dorado on June 14, without arousing any comment in the press.

The *Southern Kansas Gazette*, Augusta, reviewed the exhibitions of June 15, in one paragraph. "The circus has come and gone. It was largely attended, and various opinions prevailed as to its worthiness. We have seen better and worse; the accoutrements are old, dilapidated and faded; the attaches were quiet and orderly while here, as was the crowd in attendance."

At Howard on June 20, Cooper-Jackson was once again in close competition with another show. The single newspaper ad before show day screamed, "WAIT! WAIT! FOR THE BIG SHOW!" If the earlier conflict with Johnson and Company could be described as akin to cat and mouse, the new contestant might be called a flea behind the lion's ear. Hunter's Consolidated Shows was a miniscule wagon outfit operating out of Pittsburg, Kansas. Hunter booked Howard for June 15, five days ahead of the larger show.

A weekly paper published on Thursday was normally printed the day before, but the editor of the Howard *Courant* was a man of notable compassion and he shifted the printing time (Wednesday) stating that, "This paper goes to press a few hours earlier than usual this week, in order to allow the printers

to witness the street parade of Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s circus and menagerie. They will attend the show if they can manage to get free tickets."

The *Courant* reported on June 28, that the circus "drew quite a crowd and was a fair show as far as it went. The fellow who sold soap for a dollar a slice was here as usual and seemed to be catching lots of 'suckers.'"

By the middle of June the show generally advertised itself as Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s Great International Allied Shows.

Ed L. Brannan, press agent, called on the editor of the Humboldt *Union* and settled the advertising bill for the performances of Tuesday, June 26. The *Un-*



The steam calliope of the S. H. Barrett show in a parade in Keewanee, Illinois, September 12, 1883. Bob Parkinson collection.

ion gave the show a good review, naming several of the performers.

"Among the special and attractive features of the circus are H. G. Lamkin, in his inimitable dancing barrel act; David Castello, the wonderful bareback rider; the well-trained Fire Horse, 'Satan'; the Romelli brothers, gymnasts, in their line, are three of the best that travel; Minnie Minetta, the woman of the 'iron jaw' in her extraordinary and difficult acting, exhibited an amount of physical endurance that was truly surprising; W. W. White, the leading clown, is well up in his part makes plenty of fun; the dashing and daring bareback riding of M'le Clarinda Lowande is deserving of praise; the prince of jugglers, Eldora, was the best we have ever seen in any circus; in fact the tumbling and the show through-out is as good as we have witnessed in years.

"The menagerie contains some new and rare animals. The feature of the menagerie is the mighty war elephant,

'Bolivar,' whose weight is 8,020 pounds, and with tusks 7 feet 9 inches long. He is a monster and the largest that has ever been at this place."

The exhibition at Iola on June 27, was reviewed by the *Register* in one sentence, "The less said about the circus the better—for the circus."

Cooper-Jackson played Osage City on July 3, but aroused no comment in the press.

The Oskaloosa *Independent* was more responsive for the exhibitions of July 7. In a review published June 30, the names of several more performers were added to those mentioned in the Humboldt *Union*, including Willy Berra, Kate Storks, Lottie Cashmen, Jos. Dorian, Montezuma and Brass and a clown named Kennebel.

After the show had come and gone, the *Independent* reported, "Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s show had good audiences last Saturday. It had been south and showing continuously, we learn, for sixteen months; consequently, the property looked much run down. Competent judges, however, pronounced the show a good one. The elephant, quite a tall one and somewhat unruly, got away from its keeper Friday night, about half past 11, and took to the Delaware [river] and adjacent ponds, indulging in mud and water baths, and was not recovered until noon of Saturday. He took a drink at one of our public wells, Saturday evening, and many questions were fired at his keeper. He drinks about thirty pailsful a day; is not quite twenty years old, and weighs 8,200 pounds. The show went from here to the Falls and to Holton."

There is more than a hint of Van Amburgh in the advertising of Cooper, Jackson & Co. Some of the illustrations, such as those used in the advertising for the Augusta date of June 15, strongly resemble those used by Van Amburgh. Bolivar, "the Mighty War Elephant," was the star attraction of Hyatt Frost's aggregation. The Valley Falls *Register* reported the "manager-in-chief" to be O. J. Ferguson, and noted the presence of Will Loper. Ferguson was for many years treasurer of the Van Amburgh show, and, in 1879, Loper worked concessions on Van Amburgh.

After a show day satisfactory to all on July 9, the *Register* of July 13 commented that, "The city marshal enjoyed himself like other people at the show Monday, not a disturbance of any kind appearing to mar his pleasure."

The exhibitions at Holton on July

11, brought no response from the *Recorder*, but the happenings of Friday July 13 at Whiting produced a story half a column long. In a column headed "Whiting" the *Holton Recorder* reported a series of events worthy of any Friday the Thirteenth.

"Last Friday was show day in Whiting. Cooper, Jackson & Co.'s circus and menagerie was billed for that day. The crowd collected to witness it was very small--most people sticking to their work in preference to seeing the show.

"Between 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon a distressing accident happened. The people had just begun to go into the show and there were probably 200 people under the canvas, when a lively gale coming from the north broke some

of the rotten ropes and rickety poles and rent the weather-decayed canvas and the whole affair fell upon those underneath. Mrs. W. H. Medlock, of Straight Creek, was knocked senseless and carried to the house of S. S. Gibson, near by, where she received prompt medical aid. She lay unconscious until nearly night when she was taken to her

home. She is now getting well as fast as could be expected. Her wounds were upon the head. A little girl--I did not learn her name--was struck on the head and badly hurt. Several others were knocked down and had to have help to extricate themselves. An animal cage was overturned, but fortunately not broken. This calamity put a stop to the exhibition for the afternoon, and frightened a good many from the grounds, as the wind threatened trouble all the afternoon. At night the company gave an exhibition to a small audience.

"J. M. Arthur and C. B. Hayes had a refreshment stand erected, and when the storm came up hastened with their stuff to better shelter, while some one more cool-headed then they, secured their cash box containing some \$15.

"The show manager paid Dr. J. E. Love \$15 for attendance upon Mrs. Medlock, and gave Mr. Medlock \$25 to pay additional expenses.

"A number of persons who had purchased tickets and had passed them to the gate-keeper, stood around all the afternoon expecting to be admitted to the evening entertainment free; but no admissions were permitted without tickets.

"There are still a few persons living who think they can beat a traveling gamester at his own game. Several such are considerably behind in their cash account since show day."

In the autumn, Cooper, Jackson & Company went into winter quarters at Valley Falls.

S. H. Barrett & Company's New United Monster Railroad Shows, Oriental Circus, Egyptian Caravan and Universal Exposition of Living and Mysterious Wonders--the Sells brothers' number two show--played Holden, Missouri on June 12, and the next day invaded Kansas for a series of dates including, among others, the towns following:



The four mirrored tableau of the Barrett show in the 1883 Keewanee, Illinois parade. The wagon later appeared on the Walter L. Main Circus. Bob Parkinson collection.

June 13, Paola; June 14, Garnett; June 15, Burlington; June 16, Emporia; June 18, Chanute; June 19, Independence; June 25, Fredonia; June 26, Columbus; June 28, Girard; June 29, La Cygne; June 30, Olathe; July 6, Topeka; July 7, Manhattan; July 9, Clay Center; July 10, Junction City; July 20, Burr Oak.

Barrett boasted "A MASTODONIC MENAGERIE comprising every known species of Wild Beast, Rare Birds, and Sea 'Varmints' and Monsters, confined in 50 Massive Emblazoned Dens and Cages."

Among the "100 Champion Performers! 100" were Robert Stickney and Emma Lake, daughter of the formidable Agnes Lake and by all accounts the foremost equestrienne of her day, rivaled only by Madame Dockrill. Stickney was in a class with James Robinson and Charles Fish but rated slightly inferior to the two great masters. The Charest Family of daring funambulists rode high wheeled bicycles across their wire and were featured in an illustration used in nearly every newspaper advertisement. The noted 100 performers were advertised as:

"40 Equestrian Celebrities
"20 Double Somersault Leapers
"10 Famous Funny, Rip Roaring Clowns

"30 Gymnasts, Athletes and Aerialists"
The "Grand and Imposing Spectacle," the street parade, was claimed to be "THREE MILES IN LENGTH and the Steam Air Ship in Operation Outside." To emphasize Barrett's generosity, the ads proclaimed in large type "REMEMBER IT IS FREE TO ALL."

The *Miami Republican*, reviewing the exhibitions at Paola on June 13, re-

The S. H. Barrett show used this newspaper advertisement during the 1883 season. Pfening Archives.

At Bethany Friday, Aug. 24th.

S. H. Barrett & Co's

United Monster Railroad Shows

POSITIVELY COMING

IN ALLI THEIR UNDIVIDED AND OVERSHADOWING VASTNESS.

Introducing

A New Era in Amusements,

And completely and thoroughly revolutionizing by startling but acceptable innovations, all preceivable customs and observances of Circus Arenas.

\$100,000 invested in More than Fifty Tons of Educated Flesh,

A monster all-representing

HERD of ELEPHANTS

including twice the largest animal known to exist, and thirty the smallest Elephant ever exhibited.

5-Ton Performing Black Rhinoceros.

PAIR OF LORDLY AFRICAN GIRAFFES.

The Simian Colossus, Cynocephalus.

14 KENTUCKY THOROUGHBRED BEAUTIES. 14

The most noble, beautiful performing horses of purest Blue Grass Blood.

10 CLOWNS! 10



The One Great Circus!

OF THE CHIEFS!!

employing over

100 CHAMPION PERFORMERS! 100

ported: "The city was crowded with people come in to see the show, and during their grand parade the extra police were busy keeping the crowd back that the wagons and chariots might pass. At the afternoon performance the large tent was crowded full, all the seats being occupied. At night, too, there was a much larger crowd than is usually accorded the evening performance. The performance was good throughout, and gave general satisfaction. The feats of horsemanship by Robert Stickney, Chas. Ewers, Miss Emma Lake and Miss Jennie Ewers were exceptionally good and transcended all former displays of a like nature given in Paola."

In conclusion the *Republican* thanked press agent H. B. Everett "for interesting information in regard to the circus business, and for kindnesses extended us."

Although "the crowd at the circus Wednesday was very large and in the main rather orderly," as reported by the *Republican*, on Wednesday night, "three hammocks were stolen from Uncle Baum's yard."

At Garnett on June 14, the *Anderson County Republican* stated, "Thursday was a delightful day for the show, and the attendance was very large. It was estimated that there were not less than 7,000 people present; others put the audience at less."

"S. H. Barrett's circus which exhibited here Thursday, of last week," according to the *Weekly Journal*, "appeared to be accompanied by an unusual number of thieves and swindlers. About all the old tricks to fleece unsuspecting people out of their money were brought into play. The favorite trick, however, appeared to consist in asking for a ten dollar bill in exchange for silver. After getting the bill in his hand, the operator would suddenly discover that he had not silver enough to make the change, and would pretend to hand the bill back. He would simply hand back a one dollar bill instead of the ten, and the unsuspecting party would stick it in his pocket without looking at it, only to find on the following day that he had been victimized out of nine dollars."

The *Journal* failed to mention that as an inducement to exchange a bill for silver, the seller would offer to drop ten cents from the price of the ticket.

Two ways of measuring a crowd on circus day were the number of meals served by the restaurants and the crowd of horses and buggies around the livery stables.

At Garnett, the *Republican* reported, "At the St. James, business was brisk. Over two hundred dinners alone were

consumed. At the Commercial house, about one hundred and twenty five. Messenger, the restaurant man, fed one hundred and twenty at the noon hour, and Halderman estimated from his receipts that he set up over two hundred dinners.

"The Misses Palmer and Pierce, though they do not do an eating house business, fed sixty, and at Chal Routh's some ninety or a hundred more dined and lunched. Stinbaugh and Langley, set out 104 dinners. In all we estimate that eight hundred or a thousand people took dinner in the city at hotels and eating houses."

Dinner in Kansas, 1883, should not be confused with supper, eaten in the evening; but the difference between dinner and lunch, both noon-day repasts was perhaps the difference between a balanced meal and a sandwich or a snack.

Continuing, the *Republican* stated that, "The livery stables done (sic) a thriving business on show day. Pony Sutton fed eighty head of horses, of country men only, and Geo. L. Putnam fed one hundred and fifty or sixty. At Putnam's stable there was not room sufficient to stow away the vehicles that stopped at his stand. The street along the whole square was lined on each side of the road with buggies and wagons."

On another page the *Republican* reported the sad tale of Elmer.

"Elmer, son of the Post Master at Haskell, got so worked up at the show, Thursday, that the next day he prepared a spring-board and in trying to perform, fell and broke his shoulder blade, knocked his shoulder out of place and received a few other bruises."

The advertising for Emporia for June 16, added a few names to the list of performers featured in the show. In addition to Stickney and Lake, the ad in the *Emporia News* carried the names of:

"Mr. Charles Ewers,
The Famous Four and Six Horse
Rider.

"The Reno Brothers,
The Marvelous Triple Bar
Performers.

"Miss Jennie Ewers,
In Her Charming Equestrienne Scene,
Entitled,

"The Bride of Abydos."

"Idaletta and Wallace,
Aerial Bicyclists of the
Nineteenth Century

Whose Wonderful Performances
on the

Invisible Wire 60 Feet in the Air
Holds Thousands of People

in Breathless Awe.

"The Leotard Brothers,
Acknowledged the Greatest Acrobats
of the Age.

"Mr. Frank Fitz Williams,
The Great Irish Athlete in His
Samsonian Feats."

Among the "20 Double Somersault Leapers 20" were the names of John P. Quigley, James Kincade and Geo. Whitby who of course were "Champions of the World."

The "10 CLOWNS--CLOWNS 10" featured Fred Aymar, "the King Laugh Maker"; Joel S. Davidson, "The Shakespearean Jester"; and "The English Knockabout Pantomimist," Albert Gaston.

In addition, Barrett presented "A Troupe of Australian Maoris, Arabs, Zulus, Indians and Peculiar People from Every Clime in the World."

The *News* reported a pickpocket working the crowd assembled at the track side to watch the show unload, who performed his thievery in a brazen and novel manner.

"A large crowd of eager spectators was standing about with eyes, ears and mouth wide open, taking in the whole performance, when a man standing in their midst cried out in a clear, authoritative voice, 'Look out for the elephant!,' and at the same time spreading

Emma Lake, a well known lady rider, appeared in the performance of the 1883 Barrett show. Pfening Archives.



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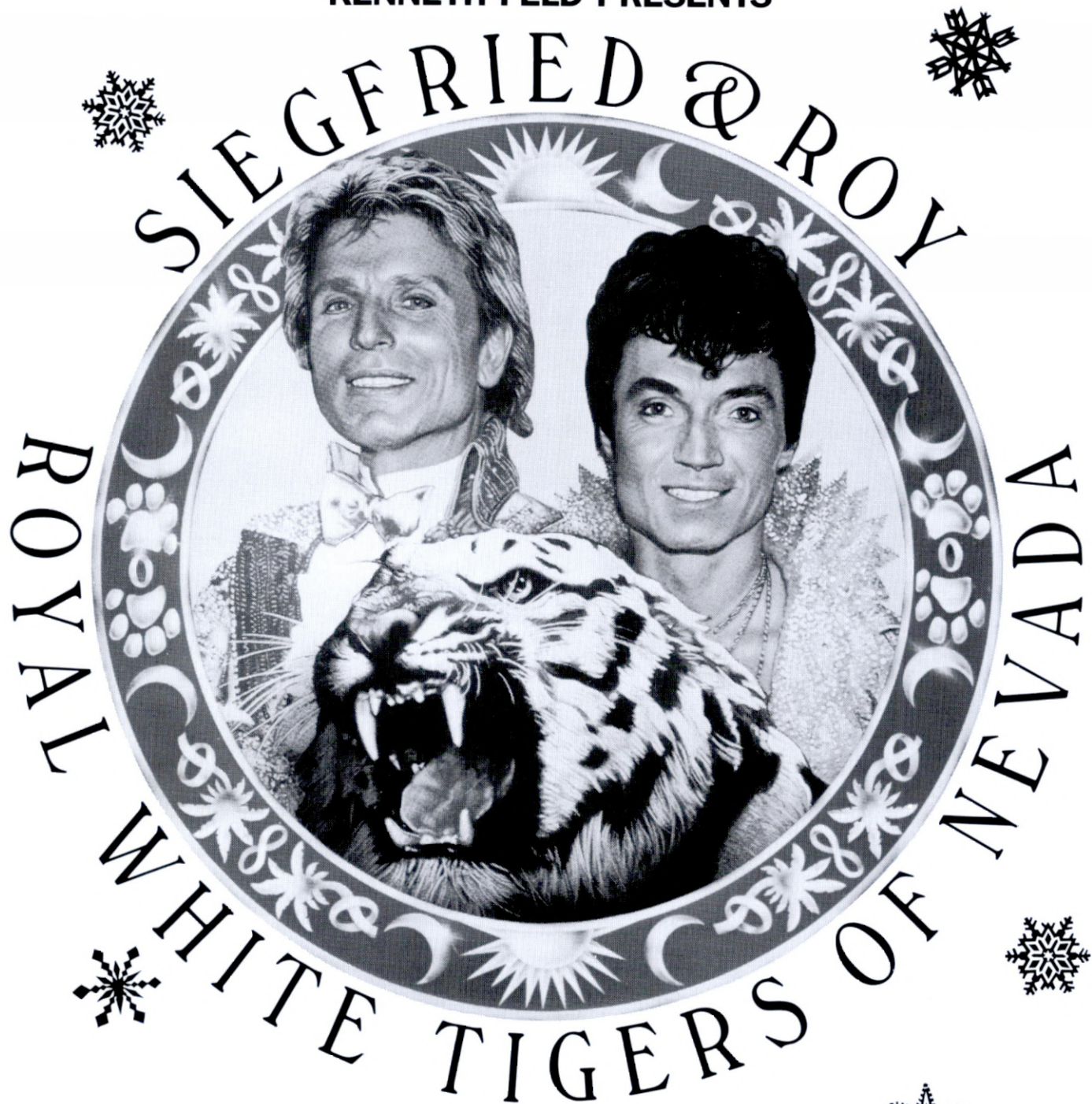
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